

## Back seat for peace

As Clinton softly cautioned, Netanyahu's statements in Washington were no less extremist than his campaign rhetoric, reports **Hoda Tawfik** from the US capital

### Turkey visit

PRESIDENT Hosni Mubarak is expected to arrive in Ankara today to hold talks with Turkey's President Suleiman Demirel and Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan on Turkey's military agreement with Israel.

Mubarak is the first Arab leader to visit the country since Turkey's first Islamist Prime Minister Erbakan's government took office last Monday.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller, Erbakan's coalition partner and head of the True Path Party, insisted yesterday on Turkey's "complete respect for its binding military agreement with Israel."

### Yes to Ghali

FOREIGN Minister Amr Moussa praised the unanimity with which African leaders attending the Organisation of African Unity summit in Yaounde, Cameroon voiced support on Tuesday for UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to hold a second term.

Moussa also stated that Egypt had refused a call for an early African endorsement of the accord banning chemical weapons across Africa because it believed the accord deserved more study first. (see p. 6)

### Price protest

HUNDREDS of university students poured onto the streets of the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, on Tuesday in protest of recent price hikes reported the Middle East News Agency. There were, however, no reports of injuries as police allowed demonstrators past the gates of Nileen University.

Earlier in June, the government announced major hikes in the prices of gasoline and electricity. The Federation of Sudanese Workers warned of dire consequences unless wages were increased. (see p.3)

### Hijack trial

THE STATE Security Court yesterday opened the trial of four persons, including two juveniles, charged with hijacking an EgyptAir flight to Libya four months ago, reports **Khaled Dawoud**.

Mohamed Selim, 44, his son, Khaled, 17, and his nephew, Ahmed Hussein Selim, 16, were charged with the hijacking of the flight en route from Luxor to Cairo and forcing its pilot to change route to Libya. The plane was carrying nearly 150 foreign tourists. The fourth defendant, Abdel-Wahab Abdel-Karim, was charged with providing the first defendant with explosives which he used to threaten the pilot.

All four defendants, when asked by the judge, denied the charges, and the elder Selim's lawyer requested that his client be referred to a psychiatrist to ascertain that he was indeed responsible for his actions. Selim, from behind bars, however, told reporters that he was not sorry for what he did, "because it is the duty of each Muslim to protect both Israel's measures against the Palestinians and conferences like that held in Sharm El-Sheikh."

Proceedings will resume on 13 July.

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The first meeting between US President Bill Clinton and Israel's new Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu failed to do anything for the peace process in the Middle East, but succeeded in affirming the "strategic ties" between the US and Israel.

The joint press conference of the two heads of state on Tuesday came as a blow to Arab and Palestinian leaders, as well as to the peace camp inside Israel. Netanyahu, offering the Arabs nothing but "peace", demanded that Arab parties to the peace process defend Israel's security against terrorism, and Clinton, taking his cue from the Likud die-hard, affirmed "the indivisible link" between peace and security.

In the first reaction to the press conference, Palestinian leaders said that Netanyahu's display of intransigence in Washington, and the failure of the US administration to extract a renewed Israeli commitment to the Madrid land-for-peace formula, was driving the peace process into its death throes. Palestinian National Authority (PNA) Justice Minister Fathi Abu Medjine warned that "Israel's public relations exercise [in Washington] was plunging the region into violence." The US had brought no pressure to bear on Netanyahu, he said,

which made the sought-after meeting between PNA President Yasser Arafat and the Israeli prime minister futile. An equally despondent minister of local government, Saeb Erakat, said "peace is slipping through our fingers like sand."

Meanwhile, Palestinians protesting Netanyahu's failure to set a date for the pullout of Israeli troops from Hebron, clashed for several hours with Israeli soldiers in Hebron yesterday and triggered an explosive device near an army checkpoint in scenes reminiscent of the 1987-93 Palestinian Intifada against Israeli occupation.

Arab League Secretary-General Esmat Abdel-Meguid, for his part, warned that Netanyahu was "playing with fire, from which he would be the first to burn". Addressing members of the New York-based Council of Foreign Relations, Abdel-Meguid said that Arabs must insist on the return of every inch of Arab land occupied in June 1967, including the Syrian Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. In the joint press conference, Netanyahu openly flaunted his reluctance to agree to the bare minimum of what the Arabs, and even the US administration up until the Israeli elections last May, had held as prerequisites

of the peace process. Conceding nothing on the Golan, he said that President Assad "should stop terrorist activities in southern Lebanon" before he could talk peace with him, "without prior pre-conditions".

Netanyahu was evasive on the issues of holding an early meeting with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, or fulfilling the previous government's pledge of an army pullout from most of Hebron in the West Bank.

The Likud prime minister was at his most brazen on the settlements issue, however. "Under the Rabin-Peres government during the last four years, the population of Jews in the areas of Judea, Samaria and Gaza grew by 50 per cent — five, zero. I assume that no one here is expecting us to do less than the Labour government on this point," he said, adding that he did not "preclude new settlements".

These words forced a mild caution from Clinton. "We know that the settlement issue can become a contentious one, can become a problem, and has to be handled with great care," the American president exhorted softly.

Throughout the press conference, Clinton appeared both conciliatory and desperate. Only once did he express concern over the future of the Middle East peace

process. "I think we're going to have necessarily a period of adjustment, and those of us who care about it need to try to minimise the negative and maximise the positive and get through it as well as possible," he said.

Trying to ease Netanyahu's "security concerns", Clinton announced that a joint US-Israeli counter-terrorism group will hold a meeting later this month; and that the US will begin providing Israel with early warning intelligence against potential missile attacks. US officials said the programme entails supplying Israel with 24-hour real time satellite data of the kind Israel was receiving during the Gulf War in 1991.

The US president, nevertheless, reiterated the main lines of the pre-Netanyahu American peace strategy in the Middle East. "I told the [Israeli] prime minister it was very important that there be a reaffirmation of the commitment that Israel has made in Oslo, and there should be an attempt to continue the comprehensive peace process, that it is essential to keep working with the Palestinians; there should be an attempt to re-engage Syria, and to work on the problem of Lebanon," said Clinton. (see p.5)

## The cost of arrogance

SHOLAMIT Aloni, former Israeli minister of science and education and former leader of the Meretz Party, warned yesterday that Netanyahu's arrogant colonial policies are a threat to the existence of the state of Israel. In a telephone interview, Aloni told Yehia Ghanem that "Israel is the only country left in the world that insists on remaining a colonial state — one that has usurped the land and rights of another people and continues to subject them to oppression," said Aloni.

This colonial policy must end, she said, otherwise Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will isolate Israel once again within the international community and alienate it from the Arab world. "The existence of the state of Israel will be jeopardised by Netanyahu's policies," she added.

Aloni said that she has pressed upon Netanyahu the need for Israel to return the Golan Heights to Syria. "The quicker we give the Golan Heights back to Syria, the sooner our political and moral losses in Israel will be alleviated," she explained.

Asked for her predictions about the region's future if Netanyahu persists with his current policy, Aloni responded, "Netanyahu has to choose between his arrogance and building healthy relations with the Arabs — and the first step toward this is to restore their usurped rights to them." She suspects, however, that Netanyahu will find it too difficult to relinquish his arrogance and obstinacy.

"The only remaining hope is that world powers will bring pressure to bear on Netanyahu and that he will feel the sting of economic pressures," she said. She further urged US President Bill Clinton to use strong persuasive measures on Netanyahu and encourage him to continue the peace process on the basis of the "land-for-peace" formula.

To Aloni and many other Israelis, Netanyahu is an "enigma". "With Netanyahu, personal ambitions come before national considerations. I hope that this does not lead to the destruction of Israel," she said.

For some time now, she continued, Israeli society has been drifting more and more towards extremism: "It is now a society rife with sharp divisions and I hope that the liberal parties such as the Labour Party and Meretz will not stand idly by, watching the grave consequences."

Aloni did not rule out the possibility that Netanyahu would discuss with Clinton a plan for a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from the south of Lebanon. However, she believes that Netanyahu might be interested in such a plan not so much because he wants to drive a wedge between the Syrians and the Lebanese, as some allege, but primarily because of the heavy losses which the Lebanese resistance has inflicted upon the Israeli occupation forces.



A BREATH of fresh air may be heading towards Cairo from Europe. An almost week-long heatwave has driven thousands to the beaches, Nile banks, and even to fountains in the city's squares. Temperatures, which have soared up to 40C in Cairo, are expected to record a noticeable decrease, starting today. According to the Meteorological Authority, humidity is also set to drop 50 per cent. Temperatures are expected to be no higher than 34C in Cairo, with a pleasant 29C on the northern coast at Alexandria. But not for long. By Monday, another heatwave is likely to hit.

## Rights put in question

An attack by a law professor on the rulings of the Supreme Constitutional Court has caused consternation in legal and political circles. **Mona El-Nahas** investigates

In May, Mustafa Abu Zeid, a former socialist prosecutor-general, justice minister and currently a professor of Constitutional Law posed a question to his students in an examination at Alexandria University. He asked them to prove that the Constitutional Court does not respect the law and the constitution. The question also said that its rulings are based more on "whim" than strictly legal grounds.

His question has caused an uproar in legal circles. Legal experts view it as beyond the bounds of authorised academic research, and ascribe personal motivations to Abu Zeid's attack. The university's faculty council has condemned his attitude, while the court's chief justice refused to comment on the grounds that the court's legal integrity is beyond question and so the issue is unworthy of attention.

Abu Zeid was the first socialist prosecutor-general in Egypt, a post created by the late President Anwar El-Sadat for the purpose of putting on trial a large number of top state figures of the Nasser regime. The arrest of these figures on 15 May 1971, and their prosecution a little later before a special court was given the name of "The Corrective Revolution" by Sadat.

Abu Zeid, in his capacity as the first holder of the post of socialist prosecutor-general, was charged with trying these "dissidents" for a number of offences reaching high treason. Later, Abu Zeid was appointed minister of justice.

In an article published in *Al-Ahram* on 17 June, he persisted in his hostile position towards the court. He cited the example of a court ruling issued in 1990, declaring a 1986 parliamentary electoral law unconstitutional. The court also ruled that, from the moment its judgement is published in the official journal, all subsequent acts of the People's Assembly would become legally null and void. President Hosni Mubarak responded by issuing a presidential decree dissolving the People's Assembly, elected in 1987.

In this way, Abu Zeid argued in the article, the court gave a retroactive effect to its ruling. He pointed out that according to the law and the constitution, such ruling should have taken an immediate effect. In other words, the ruling should not have been applied to the standing Assembly but

to the election of future assemblies. Abu Zeid concluded that the court had violated the constitution it is supposed to safeguard.

Immediately following the Alexandria law school examinations, members of the faculty council sought to disassociate themselves from Abu Zeid, saying in a statement that Abu Zeid's question, put in such a manner, in no way represented the faculty's attitude regarding the court. The faculty council also sent a letter to the court's Chief Justice Awad El-Morri to express its appreciation of the prominent role the court plays in upholding constitutional principles.

However, the controversy did not end there. Abu Zeid's question caught the eye of Shawqi El-Sayed, a member of the Shura Council. On 13 June, El-Sayed informed the prosecutor-general of the "crime" Abu Zeid has committed against the court. Prosecution investigations into the case began earlier this week.

In reaction, Abu Zeid filed a lawsuit against El-Sayed, accusing him of libel and demanding LE 500,000 compensation. El-Sayed then filed a LE1 million counter lawsuit against Abu Zeid. "Academic criticism has nothing to do with the usage of vulgar and indecent expressions," El-Sayed said.

Marghani Khairi, professor of constitutional law at Ain Shams University backed Abu Zeid in his right to express his opinion. However, he had reservations about his approach. "Everyone has the right to adopt whatever opinion he likes," he said. "But the problem is that Abu Zeid attempted to impose his opinion, using an aggressive style and improper words to defend his views."

According to Khairi, legal texts are flexible, and should not be interpreted word for word. "The law said that rulings of the Supreme Constitutional Court should take 'immediate effect'. However, jurists

of the Constitutional Court should be applied retroactively. These rulings, the court said, were not limited to cases that fell under the criminal law. The explanatory note attached to the law covering the Supreme Constitutional Court was of the same opinion."

Khairi believes that dissolving the People's Assembly was a logical step in view of the fact that it had been elected by means of an unconstitutional law. The court, Khairi added, had only ruled that the parliamentary election law was unconstitutional, and the decision to dissolve the Assembly was implemented by presidential decree. The court sustained the validity of all the laws which were passed by the People's Assembly until the date of its dissolution, and this is a point in its favour, Khairi said.

Legal sources attribute Abu Zeid's attack on the court to personal motivations. In 1988, Abu Zeid filed a lawsuit against Kamal Khaled, a former independent member of the People's Assembly, claiming that Khaled had made allegations which damaged his reputation in his book *Nasser's and Sadat's Men*. Abu Zeid claimed LE500,000 compensation. Khaled failed to submit evidence proving the accuracy of the facts in his book within the statutory five days. According to the provisions of Article 123 of the Criminal Procedures Law, Khaled thereby lost his right to present evidence.

Khaled then contested the constitutionality of Article 123, and in 1993 the Constitutional Court ruled that the article in question was unconstitutional. It is since this date, the sources say, Abu Zeid began to attack the Constitutional Court after years of praise, describing its rulings as "judicial treason". Khaled linked Abu Zeid's latest attack on the Constitutional Court to the current parliamentary campaign which is attempting to undermine its role.

### Next week:

The first in a series of articles by **Councillor AWAD EL-MORRI**, Chief Justice of the Supreme Constitutional Court

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# Who rules on electoral integrity?

Who should have the final word on disputed election results: the Court of Cassation or the People's Assembly? This long-running debate was renewed this week as parliament began reviewing court rulings on election appeals. **Gamal Essam El-Din attended**

Opposition parties are full of praise for the ongoing work of the Court of Cassation, which so far, has invalidated the results of the November 1995 general elections in 78 constituencies. MPs for these constituencies include government ministers and other prominent figures in the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP). But opposition parties are pessimistic about the prospect that the rulings will lead to fresh elections or a change in the composition of the current People's Assembly.

According to Article 93 of Egypt's constitution, appeals filed against election results should be presented first to the People's Assembly. The Assembly then refers them to the Court of Cassation for investigation. The court's rulings are submitted to parliament and to win final approval they must be endorsed by a two-thirds majority of the Assembly's 454 members.

Opposition parties charge that the NDP has traditionally taken advantage of its majority in parliament to reject Court of Cassation rulings, and thus prevent the loss of NDP seats.

Following the 1987 and 1990 elections, parliament rejected nearly all rulings of the Court of Cassation. The same was expected this year, particularly considering the unprecedented number of appeals filed by candidates who did not make it to parliament.

In 1987, the court received 200 appeals and ruled that the membership of 78 deputies, mostly NDP members, were invalid. In 1990, there were 240 appeals, and the court ruled in favour of only 40. This year, 950 appeals were filed; the court has so far issued rulings on 193 of them. It ruled that voting had been rigged in 78 constituencies, and rejected 115 other appeals.

In its meeting this week, the People's Assembly's Legislative and Constitutional Committee began reviewing the Court of Cassation reports. Committee members approved the court's rejection of 45 appeals, but turned down five other reports in which the court said results were rigged.

Ibrahim El-Nimiki, NDP member and deputy chairman of the Legislative and Constitutional Committee, denied the opposition parties' charges. The court and parliament, he suggested, might have different ways of judging the matter and gravity of the violations in terms of their influence on the final result.

El-Nimiki told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that Article 93 made it clear that it was parliament members who have the right to give a final word on appeals presented against election results and not the Cassation Court. "But the difference in the judgment between the parliament and the Cassation Court arise from the fact that the Court adopts different criteria in judging whether elections were rigged in a certain constituency or not," said El-Nimiki.

"For example, the Court considers that the failure of polling officers in auxiliary stations to sign the final report on the voting process is an indication that voting was rigged. But the Assembly does not see this failure grave enough to consider that rigging took place," he added.

According to El-Nimiki, the Assembly based its rejection of appeals on the principle that one or two mistakes in the voting process should not lead to cancelling the whole result. However, the difference between the Assembly and the Court of Cassation not only revolved on the criteria each adopted as to whether or not rigging occurred, but it also extended to interpreting the text of Article 93 itself.

Councillor Yehia El-Rifa'i, a former head of the Judges Club, said that the fact that Article 93 gives the Assembly the final say on the Cassation

Court's reports on election contests should not be used as an excuse to consistently reject the reports. Rifa'i said the constitution entrusted the Court of Cassation with investigating elections because it is a neutral body that has the experience and legal authority to judge the voting process. "However, the Assembly usually ignores this fact, insisting on rejecting the Court's reports on the grounds that they are not convincing enough to decide that elections were rigged," said El-Rifa'i.

He called for Article 93 to be amended, giving the Cassation Court the final say on election contests.

El-Nimiki agrees with El-Rifa'i's suggestion, "to put an end to the criticism levelled against the Assembly because of this article." However, El-Nimiki added, the amendment of Article 93 would entail an amendment of the constitution, something which would be difficult at present because it has been ruled out by the political leadership.

Shawki El-Sayed, a councillor at the Court of Cassation, contends that before the July 1952 Revolution, members of the then House of Representatives and Senate unanimously decided, in a joint meeting in 1951, to entrust the Court of Cassation with investigating the conduct of elections and ruling on their integrity. "The Assembly should follow this procedure again to solve the dispute over Article 93," said El-Sayed.

In its rulings this year, the Cassation Court found that ballots had been rigged in a variety of ways. Among the most popular were the registering of the same names more than once on voting lists, voting on behalf of the dead and immigrants whose names had not been removed from the voting lists, preventing candidates' representatives from monitoring the voting process in polling stations, and the failure of a large number of chairmen of auxiliary polling stations to sign the report on the voting process.

The constituencies in which the Court of Cassation said elections had been rigged included those in which Minister of Social Affairs Amal Othman and Minister of Youth and Sports Abdel-Moneim Emara had stood against Islamist candidates. Other constituencies included: Menoufiya (in Menoufia Governorate), where the previous Assembly's millionaire deputy Ibrahim Kamel stood against Hisham El-Rabie; Darb Negrin (Sharqia Governorate) where Fikri Mohamed Sadek stood against Mustafa Kamel El-Said, a former economic minister and chairman of the Assembly's Economic Committee; Abu Hamman (Sharqia Governorate) where Fakhri El-Azazi contested against Ahmed Abaza whose parliamentary immunity was lifted by the Assembly last January as a result of his alleged involvement in the burning of a number of ballot boxes; Kom Ombo (Aswan Governorate) where Mokhtar Gomaa, a former MP from the left-oriented Tagammu Party, was in competition with Mohamed El-Masri; and Hedayek El-Kobba (East Cairo) where Ahmed Zeineddin, an independent candidate, stood against Mohamed Shaaban a member of the Tagammu Party.

The court ruling in favour of Zeineddin against Tagammu's candidates confirmed reports by independent election monitors that rigging was not limited to the NDP only, although it was responsible for most of it.

Topping the list of 115 cases rejected by the Court of Cassation was that of Mohamed Sarhan against Khaled Mohieddin, leader of the Tagammu Party, in Kafr Shukr (Qalyubia Governorate) and another by former MP Mohamed El-Badrashini against Mohamed Abdel-Rahman in Ghorbal (Alexandria).



## Increasing energy

WHILE inaugurating a natural gas field in Port Fouad on Sunday, President Hosni Mubarak said that steps to expand the use of natural gas as an environmentally-friendly source of fuel should be hastened, reports Nevine Khalil. "More cars and buses should run on natural gas," he said, "to reduce toxic emissions, especially that the price of natural gas is low and its supplies are plentiful in Egypt."

After visiting the new natural gas field, Mubarak inaugurated El-Maghara coal mine in North Sinai, which has a production capacity of 180 tons per year, worth \$6 million. It is estimated that the mine's pro-

duction will increase over the next four years to reach 600 tons.

Mubarak was joined on his tour of Port Said and Sinai by several ministers and officials including Prime Minister Kamel El-Canzouli, Defence Minister Hussein Tantawi, Oil Minister Hamdi El-Banbi, Minister of Energy Maher Abaza, Minister of Industry Suleiman Keda and Minister of Information Safwat El-Sherif.

El-Banbi stressed that Egypt's credibility on the oil market encourages foreign investment in this field.

He said Egypt offers excellent privileges and incentives for international oil exploration companies. Investments by companies looking for oil and natural gas reached \$230 million for 1995-96. He said that there were six new oil and natural gas fields on the Mediterranean.

El-Banbi added that according to studies, world consumption of oil resources and natural gas is 3 billion tons and 1.3 billion tons per year, respectively, and the world's known reserves of oil are enough for another 46 years of consumption, while that of natural gas is 59 years.

## Name play angers Israelis

The Israeli ambassador is taking *Al-Ahram* newspaper to court for calling his prime minister names. **Omayma Abdel-Latif investigates**

With some three weeks before Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu embarks on a visit to Egypt, Israeli Ambassador to Cairo David Sultan is suing the Liberal Party newspaper *Al-Ahram* for libelling the new prime minister. According to Sultan, the newspaper's constant references to Netanyahu as *Netanyahu*, which could be read in Arabic as meaning "rotten Yah", amounts to "repeatedly holding the Israeli prime minister in contempt."

Sultan's move is seen as an attempt to put the brakes on a press campaign against Netanyahu; Egyptian newspapers have continued to maintain a hostile attitude to the new premier.

*Al-Ahram* is an opposition newspaper and it's playing with words to create a hostile public opinion," said Israeli press attaché Lior Ben Dor. While Ben Dor denied that the embassy was considering legal action against *Al-Ahram*, Ambassador Sultan, speaking to the BBC earlier this week, confirmed that he was "determined to take legal action against the newspaper."

Before the newly-elected prime minister took office, neither Egyptian nor Israeli officials wanted to rock the boat of bilateral relations. According to observers, once Netanyahu's headline policies were made public, Egyptian officials were even more determined to maintain relations at their existing lukewarm level.

But the Egyptian press refused to play ball. Newspapers opened fire on Netanyahu's right-wing policies which, they said, endangered the peace process and exposed the ugly face of Israel's extremism. Editorials said that Netanyahu's policies proved that Israel had not abandoned its schemes for hegemony in the Middle East and would bring the region to the verge of a new war.

*Al-Ahram*, *Al-Wafd* and *Al-Akhar* all described Netanyahu as an instigator of terrorism acts in the region. Some press reports went as far as describing his government as a war government.

An *Al-Ahram* editorial said

that Netanyahu had revealed his true intentions and with a mere shrug had blown away all the international accords and resolutions.

The new Israeli prime minister also became the butt of jokes in the press. Caricatures in *Al-Ahram* by Ahmed Ragab and Mustafa Hussein depicted him as a terrorist wearing dark glasses. In one, Egyptian viewers are watching a CNN quiz show, Netanyahu's picture appears alongside that of US President Bill Clinton, and the quiz question is: Which one is the American president?

The crisis in relations took another twist two weeks ago when Israel put pressure on the US to investigate Egypt's alleged purchase of Scud missiles from North Korea.

*Al-Ahram* is not alone in playing on the Arabic meaning of the first syllable of Netanyahu's name. *Neten Yahu* has been used on occasion by several other Egyptian newspapers, both opposition and national. But the embassy has chosen only to take action against *Al-Ahram*. "Maybe it's

because we were the trend setter and the first to use the phrase. Anyway, it's us they've decided to sue, but that's all for the best," commented Mustafa Bakry, the paper's editor-in-chief.

Bakry, who showed very little concern over the lawsuit, said that the Israeli prime minister's "rotten statements" amounted to a declaration of war. And, he added, many Israeli newspapers showed no signs of common decency in their attacks on Egyptian officials.

"The Israeli newspapers make vicious charges against Egyptian officials, especially Foreign Minister Amr Moussa, but no one complained about their bad language and name-calling," Bakry told *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

Press attacks on Netanyahu's impudent statements are not a source of embarrassment for the Egyptian government, argued prominent writer and columnist Fathi Ghanem, because there is no diplomatic or political censorship of press articles. "Netanyahu attacks us

in the American and Israeli media and it's only fair that our press counterattacks," he said.

On more than one occasion, President Mubarak has reported the complaints of Israeli officials and Jewish community leaders in the United States about the hostile attitude created by the Egyptian press against Israel. But he has always maintained that the press is independent of government policies, and free to express its opinion.

Nabil El-Hilali, a prominent leftist lawyer, said the court was unlikely to take the lawsuit seriously.

Egyptian intellectuals, he added, would remain opposed to Israel's policies until it had agreed to a comprehensive peace. "The problem with the Israelis is that they don't understand that there is a clash between their government and public opinion makers in Egypt," he said. "They like to ignore the fact that in Egypt there is an independent press and a body of intellectuals whose opinions run counter to mainstream politics."

## EOHR contests the mandatory line

A new human rights' legal committee is seeking the annulment of an Ottoman law limiting the construction and restoration of churches. **Mariz Tadros reports**

Ten decrees introduced in Egypt in 1856 by its then Ottoman rulers regulating the construction and renovation of churches are still in force today. Now, a legal committee established by the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights (EOHR) is preparing to initiate legal action to have the decrees, established by a law called *Al-Khat Al-Hamoyuni*, or the Mandatory Line, declared unconstitutional and thus made null and void. The 145-year-old decrees stipulate conditions which have to be satisfied before permission is given by the authorities for the building or restoration of churches.

The decrees have been held responsible for a few outbreaks of sectarian violence, the most serious of which was the burning earlier this year of a church in the village of Kafr Demian, in the Nile Delta Governorate of Shariya following false rumours that it was to be extended.

The move to contest the constitutionality of the remnants of the mandatory line was announced by the EOHR at a recent workshop held under the title, "Coptic rights as citizens' rights."

The workshop was chaired by Milad Hanna, well known for his views on the position of Copts in Egypt. "*Al-Khat Al-Hamoyuni* is dead... it is outdated. But we still need to struggle for the abolition of the ten decrees," he told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. He admitted that the EOHR's suit might not succeed, but "at least it is an expression of public opinion by intellectual and legal means."

It was generally agreed, Hanna confirmed, that the rights and duties of Copts in Egypt should be approached as a national rather than sectarian issue. "This is why Coptic concerns should never be a point of discussion outside Egypt, because it would mean we were complaining to foreigners. We are not."

"We object to the treatment of the rights of Copts from a minority point of view," agreed Mohamed Moneib, secretary-general of the EOHR. "It relies on the notion that they are second-class citizens who need special protection." According to Moneib, it is Copts' rights as Egyptians, not as a religious minority, which entitle them to equal rights of worship. He views the burning of the church at Kafr Demian as an example of the kind of ugly incident that this law can provoke.

Moneib believes that the EOHR's suit will succeed in getting the law repealed where others have failed because of its new approach. "We won't call for its abolition because it is harmful to a certain denomination but because it is unconstitutional and violates the human rights of all Egyptians."

He concedes that, considering the legal necessity of establishing their direct interest in a case, perhaps it would be more expedient for the lawsuit to be brought by the patriarch on behalf of the Coptic Church, rather than in the name of the EOHR. "We will be cooperating with the church to convince it to lodge such a suit," Moneib said. However, no overtures have been made as yet.

The ten decrees relating to church construction are all that is left of the *Hamayuni* law. Negad El-Borai, head of

General Group for Democratic Development, explained that the law originally dealt with a wide range of issues relating to the rights and obligations of Christians in Egypt, ranging from every Egyptian's duty to military service to Christians' right to self-determination in personal status laws, equality in the workforce as well as the need for a governmental permit to build or repair churches.

It was not until 1934, when all other Ottoman laws had been dissolved, that El-Ezabi Pasha, under-secretary at the Ministry of Interior, issued the ten decrees, the criteria which must be met before permission for church construction is granted. The decrees stipulate that churches must not be built on agricultural or state-owned land, and must not be near mosques or cemeteries. In addition, it should be determined whether the site is in a Christian or Muslim-inhabited area, and if it is the latter, local residents must approve its construction.

The granting of a permit will also be dependent on the number of worshippers likely to attend services, whether there is another church in the area, or if it is possible for Christians to travel to a nearby town to pray. The church should not be

near the banks of the River Nile, or canals, or public utilities — and the irrigation authorities must give their consent to the church's construction. If the site is close to a railway, then the railway authorities must also give their approval.

As there is no equivalent law relating to mosque construction, the ten decrees are clearly unconstitutional, El-Borai argued. They are also in violation of a series of international treaties of which Egypt is a signatory, ensuring equality before the law. In El-Borai's view, it is within the power of the Ministry of Interior to repeal the decrees since "they are only administrative and issued from an under-secretary at the ministry."

According to Youssef Sedhom, editor-in-chief of *Wafat*, a Coptic weekly newspaper, the ten decrees run contrary to the original intentions of *Al-Khat Al-Hamoyuni*, which had actually been intended to coordinate church building and uphold the place of the Coptic Church in Egypt. "At the time, there was a great deal of sectarian strife and competition among different Christian denominational groups... In a way it was used to protect the Coptic Orthodox Church against the invasion of Western missionaries. The law

fell into disuse, but has emerged again in the last 30 years, and been implemented in a negative way."

Sedhom supports the EOHR's proposed suit against the abolition of the ten decrees. "Even if the new suit is not successful, it still exerts pressure for change," he said.

However, Fahmy Howeidy, a prominent writer on Islamic and political affairs, sees the question of the ten decrees as largely irrelevant. "Rather, the issue is: do we need more places of worship? For example, why have twelve mosques in an area when you only need three? The same principle applies to churches."

However, he conceded, "disrespectful laws such as the requirement for a presidential decree to repair churches are clearly absurd."

Howeidy was dubious about the wisdom of the EOHR taking on such a case. "They are playing with fire," he declared. "Such measures only lead to social fragmentation. Factions which aim to divide our society should be opposed, since they threaten our national unity, and only elevate feelings of animosity. We should be talking about defending a nation, state and people..."

## Wafdist split

A senior member of the Wafd Party is leading a breakaway faction seeking to form a new "conservative" Wafd. **Omayma Abdel-Latif reports**

Only a few weeks after the Wafd Party elected a new Wafdist Authority — the party's highest body — and while party leaders were busy mending fences and brushing aside rumours of a power struggle, long-time Wafdist Adly El-Mouallid this week announced that he was leaving the party. El-Mouallid revealed plans to form a new conservative Wafdist party.

Deputy party chairman Yassin Serageddin strongly denied that the split was the culmination of a bitter and extended internal power struggle and asserted that the new movement would in no way undermine the existing Wafd Party.

"Many big names have broken away from the party before, like Makram Ebeid, Ahmed Pasha

El-Noqrashi and Ahmed Maher, and it never affected the Wafd," Serageddin told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. "We've had other splinter factions before too, like the liberal Wafdist. But where are they now? The Wafd remains as strong as ever."

El-Mouallid, who joined the Wafd in 1949, said that his splinter group was committed to returning to the party's old traditions and principles. He told the *Weekly*: "We want to remain loyal to the policies and principles of the old Wafd, which we embraced before the 1952 Revolution."

El-Mouallid said that he had submitted an application to the Political Parties Committee earlier this week. This body is responsible for issuing licences granting groups legal political

party status. According to El-Mouallid, more than 500 Wafdist are breaking away from the main party to join his new conservative group. El-Mouallid is still nominally a member of the mainstream Wafd Party, but is under threat of being stripped of his membership.

"The party is now motivated by personal interests. It has become a family business and very little politics is involved," said El-Mouallid.

The current Wafd Party, he added, was flirting with the government and becoming less of an opposition party.

"They have become the government's yes-men in the People's Assembly," he charged.

Serageddin flatly rejected El-Mouallid's accusations, insisting that while there had been some development in the party line, basic Wafdist principles remained intact.

"We object to the government's policy on certain issues, but we agree when it is for the benefit of the country," said Serageddin. "We maintain our original principles of respecting democracy and press freedom, and the tough tone of the articles in our newspaper is ample demonstration of this."

Sources inside the party said that there were unlikely to be any further breaks from party ranks, particularly in view of the fact that forming a new political party in Egypt is no easy task.

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Galal Nasser peeks behind the doors of the closed meeting between presidents Mubarak and Bashir on the fringes of last month's Arab summit, and, in a separate article below, explores the two Nile Valley countries' thorny road to reconciliation

# Mubarak and Bashir behind closed doors



Political observers attest that the scene in front of the Presidential lounge at Cairo airport was astounding. When Sudanese President Omar Bashir emerged from his private plane to attend the Cairo Arab Summit last month, President Hosni Mubarak received him with open arms.

The gesture was remarkable since, according to UN and Organisation of African Unity (OAU) resolutions, Sudan stands accused of providing shelter to three of the suspects in the thwarted attempt to assassinate Mubarak in Addis Ababa in June 1995.

Yet, Mubarak was keen to meet with Bashir on the fringes of the Arab summit. The president's visit to the Meridian Hotel, where Bashir and his delegation were staying, seemed to be an attempt to relay the message that the era of Arab dispersion has ended, and that Arab national security must prevail over inter-Arab contention, and over even such a bitter personal experience as the attempt on his life.

By meeting with Bashir, Mubarak sought to urge Syria, Jordan, Libya and Palestine to sit together at the negotiation table. He was concerned with the summit's success, and most importantly, gathering Arabs together.

Observers of events during the last three months know that the Mubarak-Bashir meeting was not a surprise, but the result of efforts exerted by Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad, and Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi shortly before the summit.

According to a statement to *Al-Ahram Weekly* from sources close to the Egyptian-Sudanese negotiations, the meeting was to take place after the first

closed summit session on 22 June at noon. However, President Mubarak asked to delay the meeting till the following day. Mubarak and Bashir met early morning on Sunday 23 June at the Meridian Hotel. Both were keen not to have a third party attend, in order to be as frank and fruitful as possible.

The sources summarised the meeting between the two presidents as follows:

At the start of the meeting, Mubarak assured Bashir that he held no personal bitterness toward Sudan. He said that Egyptian-Sudanese relations have always been deep-rooted, and that since his youth, he has known that the two countries were one and the same nation.

Bashir reciprocated, saying that he came to Cairo with the sincere hope that Egyptian-Sudanese disagreements would be resolved. Bashir hinted that whatever recent misunderstandings there may have been, he came to Cairo with a genuine desire to open a new chapter in the relationship between the two countries.

The meeting then got down to business. Mubarak insisted that a new chapter in Egyptian-Sudanese relations should be based on strong foundations. He told Bashir, "Our disagreement concerns terrorist groups that live on Sudanese territories... [and it is] irrational to accept such a state of affairs while seeking stable Egyptian-Sudanese relations."

President Mubarak continued, "I do not know why the Sudanese government gives asylum to these terrorists. Their presence in your country besmirches your image before the entire world and your neigh-

bours. We do not accept by any means that Sudan and its people should be accused of terrorism."

President Bashir described those allegations as "untrue", and said "conspiring states want to harm Sudan and its people." President Mubarak then replied, "These are not allegations, brother Omar, they are facts. Our security apparatuses have lists of terrorists who live inside Sudan. Moreover, investigations made by the Ethiopian government are further proof. Though there is even more evidence, I hope that it turns out to be false."

Mubarak also added, "In the beginning, I said that it was not possible that Sudan was providing shelter to terrorists. I asked Egyptian security forces to confirm their information and not simply throw accusations at Sudan... But, each time, they came up with new evidence."

Mubarak noted, "I am amazed! What harms Egypt also harms Sudan! If some terrorists came from Sudan to commit terrorist acts in Egypt, wouldn't this jeopardise Sudanese security as well?" Bashir answered, "This is natural... Therefore, if it is proven that persons came from Sudan to commit terrorist acts in Egypt, be sure that this will be an expression of individual desires that has nothing to do with the Sudanese government... This can happen with any other neighbouring country... It is possible that individuals can come to Sudan from Egypt and commit terrorist acts. In this case, we cannot accuse Egypt of conspiring with those individuals."

At this point, Mubarak said, "Brother Omar, we want to speak frankly so that we can close the door

on our disagreements, if there is a genuine desire to do so... There are terrorist camps in Sudan... These camps should be closed down... There are terrorists living in Sudan... They are threatening our security and they should be handed over to Egypt to take the necessary legal action against them, because their presence in Sudan is a threat to Egyptian security. More importantly, those individuals are wanted in accordance with the latest UN Security Council resolution... These mercenaries groups have contacts with elements in the Sudanese government."

Mubarak added, "Frankly speaking, I tell you that there is evidence against Turabi. He hires elements to undermine our stability and development... not only ours but that of other states as well... Nations have no time to spend on such matters. The development process and the challenges it poses are difficult issues. If we exhaust our powers in fighting terrorism, what do we have left for development?"

Bashir said, "I assure you over and over again, Mr President that we, as a government, are keen to safeguard security, peace and stability in Egypt..."

Before ending their discussion, Mubarak asked the Sudanese president to demonstrate his good will in practical terms and in light of their deliberations by agreeing to have security officials from both countries meet, study Egyptian security reports, establish an Egyptian-Sudanese security committee in Sudan, all of which are to confirm or disprove Egypt's claims concerning terrorist elements taking shelter in Sudan.

This committee should proceed with its work until

all pending security problems are totally resolved, Mubarak said. In the case of a disagreement between security officials in both countries, Mubarak suggested that the matter be transferred to higher levels. Nevertheless, hostile media campaigns in both countries should be stopped, he added, and both governments should not denounce each other to safeguard mutual ties.

The sources also told the *Weekly* that during the talks, Mubarak severely criticised Sudan's confiscation of Egyptian possessions in its territories, and considered such acts as a violation of Egyptian rights. Bashir promised to study all aspects of this problem, suggesting that technical representatives of the two countries can discuss such matters, and that he would do his best to eradicate the effects of this problem. Bashir also suggested continuing meetings at higher levels between political officials of both countries to sort out all the remaining problems.

Mubarak emphasised that he has no objection to this suggestion, but said, "This depends on the steps that Sudan must take..." In return, Bashir asked that no strings be attached to having those meetings, while Mubarak placed great emphasis on the cooperation of Sudanese security officials, "because this would be the best means to resolve pending issues". Mubarak added, "If there is a need to have urgent meetings between high political officials, they would take place."

The two heads-of-state agreed that Sudan would prepare a memorandum explaining the steps it has taken to remove terrorists from its territories.

## Khartoum's test of sincerity



The invitation of Sudanese President Omar Bashir, previously persona non grata as far as Egypt was concerned, to the Cairo Arab Summit, came as a surprise to many. While in Cairo, President Hosni Mubarak and Bashir hammered out an agreement to investigate the presence of foreign extremist groups in Sudan with the ultimate aim of removing them from Sudanese soil. The investigations were to be undertaken by a joint Egyptian-Sudanese committee.

According to Egyptian Minister of Interior Hassan El-Alfi, the committee is operating in top secrecy, work is progressing well and there is a high level of cooperation to avoid any leaks of information, which, he said, would be of great benefit to terrorists, helping them escape or alerting them to security procedures.

A security source told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the committee was studying issues raised in Egyptian security reports over the last six years, relating to the Sudanese regime and anti-Egyptian Islamist groups based in Sudan.

Mubarak complained on Tuesday however that little concrete progress was being achieved. In remarks addressed at a meeting of the "political action group" made up of the prime minister, a number of government ministers and the speaker of the Shura Council, Mubarak said that "the contacts currently underway through various avenues have as yet produced no concrete results," according to a press briefing made by Information Minister Safwat El-Sherif following the meeting.

According to El-Sherif, these contacts have not "brought about initiatives which could allow for an improvement in relations between Egypt and Sudan." The first of these "initiatives", El-Sherif added, "would be to extradite those accused in terrorist operations [against

Egypt] and in the assassination attempt against Mubarak in Addis Ababa in June of last year.

The charges against Khartoum under consideration are as follows:

- hosting extremist elements, known as the Arab Afghans, of Arab, African and Asian nationalities, and offering them facilities, visas, official residence, financial support and treating them as VIPs;

- unconditionally opening all borders, ports and airports to receive the Arab Afghans;

- establishing training camps in the Sudanese bush to train extremists from different nationalities, and facilitating their departure from Khartoum to their countries of origin to commit terrorist acts;

- initiating investment projects on Sudanese territory and using the revenue to finance terrorist operations;

- providing equipment for terrorist operations, including weapons, explosives and tools to forge official documents;

- organising political and religious conferences for extremist groups from different Arab states with the aim of exerting pressure on the Arab regimes to give concessions to those groups.

Elements of the Sudanese intelligence apparatus are supervising military training camps for Islamist militants of various nationalities. Evidence for this was provided by the confession of one of the Egyptians arrested during the seizure of a

large haul of weapons and explosives at Kom Ombo near Aswan. According to the confessions, the officers concerned met Arab Afghan leaders at Khartoum airport and accompany them in total secrecy to camps outside the capital.

Some senior officers of the Sudanese army train extremist cadres in top-of-the-line weaponry, the use of explosives and spying.

Training projects in some of the camps include political assassination and the use of explosives.

Setting up and operating import-export offices as a front for the Arab Afghans resident in Sudan;

using Sudan as a base from which the Arab Afghans can return to their homelands or move to other neighbouring countries such as Eritrea, Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia, and some European countries such as Italy, Britain, Norway, Switzerland, Bulgaria, Denmark and France.

Egypt handed over to the Sudanese authorities a list including locations of camps numbered from one to twenty and the nationalities of their occupants: Maghrebis, Egyptians, Nigerians, Kenyans. It also produced a list of names of those accused of attempting to assassinate President Mubarak.

It seems that the firm declarations made by Egyptian officials encouraged the Sudanese regime to try and distance itself from these groups. Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr

Moussa declared that all points of disagreement had been discussed at the Mubarak-Bashir meeting, which in itself was a positive step. And Osama El-Baz, President Mubarak's advisor on political affairs, said that the way was now clear for Sudan to prove its good intentions and change its former policy.

Reports coming from Khartoum after the Mubarak-Bashir meeting indicate several changes in Sudan's domestic and foreign policies. It seems that a severe conflict has emerged between the Sudanese government and the militant groups residing in the country, because Khartoum had asked members of those groups to leave. Thousands of Arab Afghans, together with some members of Palestinian groups, have been living in Sudan for years. The conflict was reinforced by the regime's current concern with internal socio-economic issues.

Hassan Meiki, a prominent official in the Islamic Front, appealed to Islamists throughout the world not to ask Sudan to host refugees and asylum seekers, because the country needed all its resources to solve its own serious domestic problems.

While some agreed to leave, others refused, which threatened to bring them into direct conflict with the regime.

Analysts see a reconciliation between the two countries as particularly important at this juncture. Ahmed Thabet, assistant professor of political science at Cairo University said that this was a period when both countries were facing great challenges, with Ethiopia's recent project to build two dams on the River Nile, and Israel's growing influence in Eritrea and Ethiopia. And, as Egypt's gateway to Africa, good relations between the two countries would always be to Egypt's advantage.

However, Sudanese opposition figures in Cairo were sceptical that Khartoum's efforts at reconciliation were an indication of any real change within the regime. Any efforts on the part of Bashir, they say, would soon lead to conflict with Hassan Al-Turabi's Islamic Front, committed to the export of its brand of extremist Islamism. Haider Ibrahim, director of the Centre for Sudanese Studies in Cairo believes that the Sudanese government will not fulfil its pledges to Mubarak. On the contrary, the regime would smuggle wanted militants to

other destinations before the security committee began its work. Not only this, but the Sudanese government would be unlikely to hand over the most wanted terrorists, namely those who stand accused, or have been convicted, of crimes.

Taha Ibrahim, a Sudanese lawyer, writer and member of the opposition, also sees the possibility of genuine reconciliation as remote. "I believe the extremist groups are Egypt's number one enemy. They are strongly connected with the Islamist movement in Sudan, which has repeatedly declared its plan to export its ideology to neighbouring countries," he said. "The Bashir regime does not have a concrete project for rapprochement with Egypt. What is happening now is a superficial step on the regime's part. What they are really doing is using the terrorist groups as a bargaining card so that Egypt will not oppose Sudan in the international arena."

The chairman of the Centre for Sudanese Information and Strategic Studies in Cairo, Gamal Abu Seif, described the Khartoum regime as "a chess piece being moved around by the international Islamist organisation".

He stressed that in spite of tense relations between the two countries, Sudanese citizens living in Egypt still feel they are living in their own home. He also emphasised that the status of the Sudanese opposition in Egypt would not be affected by efforts at reconciliation with the Khartoum regime, "because the Egyptian government would never retreat from its policy of welcoming Sudanese to Egypt."

is only showing a conciliatory face until the crisis is past."

This dichotomy between perceived attitude and concrete actions perhaps reveals the major reasons behind the conflict between the two countries over the past six years: their perception of self and their place within the region. Sudan wants to disseminate its experience in creating an Islamic state, so it continues to support groups and individuals advocating the same ideology.

Egypt, on the other hand, is opposed to theocratic government. It adopts a pragmatic attitude in dealing with international and regional variables, and focuses on policies of good relations within the region, non-interference in the internal affairs of neighbouring countries, and cooperates with all countries on the basis of exchanging benefits and privileges.

It is hard for these two philosophies to find a meeting point, says Hassan Abu Taleb, editor-in-chief of the *Al-Ahram Strategic Portfolio*, particularly as Sudan supports extremist groups which seek to usurp power from the legitimate government of their home countries. Sudan believes its model of Islamism is a pivot and guide for other models which could develop and take power in neighbouring countries. Sudan would then be at the spiritual and political centre of a regional bloc stretching across western and northern Africa.

According to Abu Taleb, this irreconcilable difference in political philosophy, together with the policies they generate, is the main reason behind the current distance between Cairo and Khartoum. Hence, instead of being a "strategic" buffer zone for Egypt, as has been Sudan's role throughout history, particularly in moments of crisis such as the wars with Israel in 1967 and 1973, Sudan has become a nuisance, and a threat to Egypt's security.

## Tehran kept at a distance



Although Syria has attempted to reconcile Egypt and Iran, the time does not seem right for the two states to put aside their differences, writes Nevine Khalil

Recent changes in the region have brought about an upsurge in diplomatic efforts by Iran to mend relations with Egypt after almost two decades of diplomatic freeze. The new Israeli government, the Turkish-Israeli military agreement and the recent Arab summit have all contributed to jolting Iran into a campaign of piecemeaking through the good offices of Syria.

Egypt, however, has stood its ground. President Hosni Mubarak cold-shouldered the Iranian overtures and rejected a proposal for a ministerial meeting between Egypt, Syria and Iran. Mubarak said on Sunday that, because Iran continues its operations against a number of countries including Egypt, "we declined" the invitation.

The day before, Mubarak's political adviser Osama El-Baz said that while the Iranian leadership asserted its "readiness and willingness to mend fences with Egypt", Egypt would only mend relations when there are "deeds and tangible evidence" to prove this.

"For relations to improve between the two countries there must be an Iranian change of mind and policy," El-Baz told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. Tehran must stop interfering in the domestic affairs of Arab nations, desist from aiding and supporting terrorist organisations and activities, and "no longer try to twist the arm of Arab countries in the Gulf region".

Since last month's Arab summit in Cairo, Damascus has been working hard to try and ease tensions between Tehran and Egypt. Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq Al-Shar' came to Cairo last Thursday after holding talks in Tehran, bringing a message from the Iranian leadership expressing its desire to mend relations with Egypt.

But according to El-Baz, Syria was not really acting as a mediator between

Cairo and Tehran. "This is not mediation, properly speaking. It is merely Syria relaying the spirit found in Tehran," El-Baz said. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mahmoud Mohamed said on Monday that the failure of Syrian mediation was "regrettable".

The main objective of Al-Shar's visit to Tehran, however, was to find ways to diffuse tensions between Bahrain and Iran. At the beginning of last month, Bahrain accused Iran of instigating a failed coup in the country.

Relations between Egypt and Iran's Islamist rulers have been strained from the start. Iran broke diplomatic ties with Egypt in 1979, soon after the Islamic Revolution, because the late President Anwar El-Sadat gave asylum to the ousted pro-West Shah and signed a peace accord with Israel.

Although Iran strongly opposes the existence of the state of Israel and the peace process, it is now seeking to break out of its isolation. Since Egypt is a major regional power, Tehran sees mending relations with Cairo as a starting point in regaining legitimacy in the international community.

It is Tehran's attempts to export its "Islamic revolution", that remain the major bone of contention between the two countries today. "Terrorism is the main ob-

stacle," said Hala Mustafa, an expert on the Islamism at the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies, "and if Iran does not stop supporting terrorism, Egypt will not gain much by improving relations." Mustafa believes that an Iranian change of heart is very unlikely because its foreign policy "is based on ideological beliefs which in part condone the support of fanatical trends [through which Iran] gains its strength."

Sebaie Mohamed Sebaie, head of the Eastern Studies Centre at Cairo University, also has doubts about whether Iran is genuinely building bridges with Egypt. "Iran must first present a line of action of how it intends to appease Egypt," Sebaie said. "And I doubt this is happening."

According to Sebaie, continuing conflict between President Ali Hashemi Rafsanjani and spiritual leader Ali Khamenei led to wavering in Tehran's intentions.

"This is very trying because in the end it is doctrinal opinion which regulates Iran's relations with Egypt," he said. Some analysts believe that Egypt should mend its fences with Iran, and use the improved relationship as a trump card vis-à-vis the US and Israel. Mustafa, however, believes that the gamble would be too risky. "The Iranian card would have to be used very cautiously,"

she warned, "because Iran would drag along its conflicts with the US, Israel and other countries in the region."

Sebaie agrees that Iran would be the greater beneficiary of Iranian-Egyptian reconciliation. Iran, an Islamic, but non-Arab country, cannot effectively challenge Egypt's leading role in the Arab and Islamic worlds, says Sebaie, and is therefore driven to seek to break out of its current isolation. Close ties with Egypt would be invaluable in achieving such a goal.

Asked by the *Weekly* whether Syria's mediation efforts were an attempt to justify its own relations with Tehran, El-Baz said, "I don't think so. Syria does not have to justify its relationship with Tehran." He said that an alliance between Syria and Iran to counter the Turkish-Israeli military agreement was unlikely. "We did not get the impression that Syria was trying to align itself with Iran. Syria is in full alliance with the rest of the Arab countries and not with any non-Arab country."

Edited by Wadie Kirolos

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## Gearing up for growth

**Mohamed A. El-Erian** reviews the outcome of a recent workshop on developing Arab financial markets

Last month, a group of policy makers, market participants and academics from the region met in Abu Dhabi to discuss the outlook for developing financial markets. The impetus for this get-together was a simple belief that financial markets play a key role in enhancing countries' economic welfare. As one participant put it, "these markets constitute the oil in the engine of growth and development". If they malfunction, the process of growth and development can come to a standstill, or at least falter.

The workshop, organised jointly by the Abu Dhabi-based Arab Monetary Fund and the Cairo-based Economic Research Forum, was significant in at least three respects.

First, it represented an excellent example of effective collaboration between an official regional financial institution and a non-governmental regional academic organisation. While this sort of collaboration is common in industrialised countries and in many developing countries, particularly in Latin America and East Asia, it is still rare in our region. The Abu Dhabi workshop provided a clear illustration of the importance and benefits of such collaboration.

Second, the workshop brought together participants under a banner that included three main objectives. It provided them with a forum and helped them find a common language through which they could discuss the obstacles they face. It has already been proven on the global economic arena that such discussions are instrumental in implementing sound economic policies. Not only were various ideas put forth, but the differing view points served as a means of separating the feasible from the unfeasible. Indeed, this give-and-take dialogue has become part and parcel in the decision making process on the national, regional and international levels. The Arab region stands to benefit from similar examples of cooperation and collaboration between policy makers, market participants and academics.

Third, the workshop resulted in a consensus on several key points of interest to policy makers as they seek to strengthen their country's financial markets. On the most basic level, the discussions confirmed that while the causal relationship may not be a simple, uni-directional one, there is no doubt that financial market development is an integral part of the economic growth process.

Macroeconomic stability—particularly, a low and stable inflation rate and an adequate and sustainable foreign exchange cushion—was deemed a precondition for smoothly-functioning financial markets. It was also recognised that well-run financial markets can only be built on sound institutions. We should therefore focus our attention on strengthening our institutions so that they are responsive to market demands, insulated as much as possible from the political process, and compatible with the realities of an increasingly complex and globalised international financial system.

For the institutions to function efficiently, the operating environment must be adequate. This implies that information must be available in a timely and comprehensive manner, that property rights be undisputed and the quality and reliability of accounting and auditing systems be on par with their international counterparts. These factors are essential for the proper pricing of risk.

Officials also have a responsibility to ensure that credible and transparent regulation of the financial system is implemented. This improves its operation and reduces the risk of a costly financial crisis occurring which can undermine economic growth and efficiency.

Participants in the seminar agreed not only on these findings, but also on the benefit of participating in the discussions that led to these findings. It is to be hoped that this process will be repeated more frequently on a wide range of economic topics, thereby helping the region meet the challenge of the future and fully realising its economic potential.

The writer is the deputy director of the Middle East Department at the International Monetary Fund. The views expressed in the article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the IMF.

## EBA lobbies for privatisation now

Economists and experts stressed in a recent seminar that the government must speed up the privatisation process **Shereen Abdel-Razek** reports

The privatisation programme and the main obstacles obstructing its development was the subject of a seminar held by the Egyptian Businessmen's Association (EBA) last week. Participants in the one-day seminar stressed that the government must not hesitate to put up for sale greater portions of public sector companies given that the current policy of divesting minority stakes of state-owned companies is not succeeding in attracting investors.

Said El-Naggar, a leading economist and president of the New Civic Forum, a liberal think-tank, stressed the necessity of getting rid of public sector entities, saying that they have a negative effect on the national economy. He pointed out that the market of any state-led economy is victimised by monopolistic practices and the absence of efficient competitiveness. El-Naggar also said that foreign trade is another sector that is affected by the state's preeminence in the ownership of the means of production. The problem, he said, is that the government channels the bulk of its resources for import-substitution industries to cover the local demand while neglecting exports. El-Naggar explained that Egyptian exports of industrial commodities are valued at less than LE4 billion a year.

Discussing the importance of minimising the role of the state in the national economy, El-Naggar pointed out that customs imposed by the state over-protect domestic industries. In the future, as free trade agreements are implemented, these industries will be forced to pay the price. He claimed that the government must continue with the sale of public sector companies, even at less than their value, because it will lose even more if they remain under its control.

Said El-Tawil, chairman of the EBA, noted that no investor is currently interested in buying a 10-20 per cent minority stake in a company where the board of directors is dominated by public sector representatives. He stated that over the last few decades it has been proven that the public sector is incapable of efficiently managing productive assets. El-Tawil noted that the deteriorating state of public sector companies represents a heavy burden on the Egyptian economy.

He outlined a number of obstacles hindering the privatisation process. The first, he said, was the misunderstanding surrounding the effect of privatisation on workers. El-Tawil explained that 974,000 workers are employed in the country's 314 public sector enterprises, while the total workforce is 16 million. The number of workers expected to be laid off in these companies is 70,000. Compensations paid to these workers will not exceed 10 per cent of the expected revenue from privatisation.

Second, El-Tawil pointed out that inaccurate evaluation of the companies being privatised has discouraged new investors. He said that a company should not only be evaluated according to its assets, but other factors must also be taken into consideration such as its market share, its exports and labour productivity.

A third impediment to the privatisation process, according to El-Tawil, is the weak performance of the capital market. Mohamed El-Sahragi, a senior consultant with Arthur Andersen's Partnership in Development Project, a technical adviser and consultant to the Egyptian government on matters of privatisation and its implementation, presented a paper outlining how to choose among the different techniques adopted to privatise public enterprises. Among the methods he outlined were public offerings, sales to anchor investors and management contracts. After evaluating each of these sales techniques, El-Sahragi stated that the sale of majority shares to anchor investors and the rest through public subscription is the best vehicle for privatisation. This technique, he said, guarantees the improvement of the company's performance, widening the ownership base and maximising the sales revenue in addition to stimulating the capital market.

Hazem Hassan, chairman of KPMG Hazem Hassan — Accountants and Consultants, said he believed that the organisational status of the holding companies, which currently own the public sector companies, is hampering the pace of privatisation. The partially sold subsidiaries remain under the control of the holding companies. He called for decentralisation of the sale decision so that companies being privatised can break free from the holding companies.

Youssef Boutros-Ghali, minister of state for economic affairs, also speaking at the seminar, stressed that the social stability of workers must be maintained throughout the privatisation process, even if this means not realising the highest levels of economic efficiency. He defined the Egyptian privatisation programme as a social contract between the government, the employer and the workers. Boutros-Ghali pointed out that privatisation changes some economic concepts such as the concept of state governance of the national economy. New economic principles are introduced and implemented. The efficiency of market mechanisms in the distribution of national resources, according to Boutros-Ghali, is the first of these principles. He explained that since the private sector is more efficient in managing these resources, the government should concentrate on using market mechanisms to realise the political and social goals.

## The key to success

The underlying theme of *Private Sector Development in Egypt* is that the private sector will be at the core of Egypt's development strategy in the coming years. To assist the private sector in achieving its task, the government should provide a stable, predictable and appropriate legal environment.

Divided into 10 chapters, the work is a collection of papers presented by individuals and institutions participating in Egypt's First Private Sector Development Conference, which was held in October 1994. Contributors argue that the government's new role must be to guard and regulate the market, and allow the private sector to initiate growth.

Many of the recommendations brought forward in the book under review are already being tackled by the government. One such proposal is the call for the modification of rental laws to encourage investors to build for rental purposes. In the middle of February, a new law was promulgated, providing that the rental rates of new apartments, and vacant ones in old buildings, be determined by the forces of supply and demand. Similarly, several papers presented in the book stressed the necessity of enacting an anti-trust law. Such a law, however, is expected to pass through the People's Assembly in its current session.

In the introduction, Marcelo Giugale, a senior economist in the World Bank's Latin America and the Caribbean Department, and Hamed Mobarak, director of the government's Civil Service Reform Unit, analyse the importance of private sector development (PSD), and outline the elements needed to create an environment conducive to doing business in Egypt.

Giugale and Mobarak begin by reviewing the progress of economic reforms and the structural adjustment programme implemented in Egypt over the last five years. They maintain that economic reform implies a shift away from a public sector-dominated economy to a market-based one in which the private sector plays the leading role. They conclude that privatisation is the "core tool in the country's new development strategy". However, they question the pace and timing of economic growth through PSD.

For a country confronted with four major challenges; namely unemployment, poverty, the need to attract investments and boost exports—Giugale and Mobarak highlight "the need for fast, outward-oriented, job-generating, private sector-led growth, as the key to eliminating poverty in Egypt within, say, one generation."

Nevertheless, they question the private sector's ability to rise to the challenge. They also review the steps that need to be taken to facilitate the private sector's task. Accordingly, Giugale and Mobarak call for the implementation of policies that promote financial stability, guarantee the efficient allocation of resources and encourage savings and investment. They demand a re-vamping of Egypt's commercial judicial system which is "grossly under-funded" and "badly in need of additional qualified judges".

In the introduction, the editors called for predictability in the tax system since investors are deterred by the lack of clear-cut criteria for the assessment of taxes.

Another impediment to the private sector is the shortage in the supply of skilled labor. The

*Private Sector Development in Egypt*, edited by Marcelo Giugale and Hamed Mobarak; The American University in Cairo Press, 1996

writers list two main barriers to skill-building in Egypt. First, secondary schools are not sufficiently aware of the skills required by companies today. Second, the private sector itself does not contribute to the training process.

They also stressed that a cornerstone for the growth of the private sector is for it to become export-oriented. However, this necessitates eliminating unnecessary costs borne by export-oriented industries, such as the cost of imported inputs and export infrastructure services like ports, transportation and shipping, which are government-owned and monopolistically priced.

Financing, particularly long-term financing, is another central issue. According to Giugale and Mobarak, "The three core long-term instruments for corporate finance are still underdeveloped—long-term credit, a securities market and leasing."

Meanwhile, although small and micro-enterprises (SMEs) represent 98 per cent of private units, and produce approximately 80 per cent of the country's value added, these enterprises have virtually no access to legal working space, formal credit or markets. Moreover, banks are unable to evaluate and supervise small-scale project loans.

Lack of access to marketing is another dilemma confronting SMEs as they attempt to penetrate a market dominated by government institutions. And while their location within cities is considered a violation of urban planning regulations and a pollution hazard, they have difficulty in acquiring business space in the new industrial zones.

The Egyptian Businessmen's Association (EBA) and the American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt (AmCham) discuss the roles of the government and the private sector in the first two chapters. According to EBA, "the state should divest itself of ownership and production roles" and should instead become "service-oriented" by extending a helping hand to the private sector in order to create job opportunities and increase exports. In addition, the state should ensure fair competition within a market-controlled economy.

AmCham notes that the government should cease to grant approvals and licences to investors and become a "registration agent that monitors and regulates the market through efficient standard-setting and deterring enforcement."

Three elements are needed to create an environment conducive to private-sector-led development. AmCham lists these as being, "stability, transparency and sustainability".

AmCham recommends that Egypt follows the path taken by the economically-successful Far Eastern countries by boosting private domestic investment, relying on its abundant human re-

sources and encouraging international competition.

Most importantly, AmCham stressed, change will only come through a "private-public partnership", and greater involvement of the private sector in the overall management of the Egyptian economy.

In its paper, AmCham listed a number of reforms which Egypt's private sector deemed as prerequisites. Foremost among these suggestions is the reformation of the legislative environment by removing obstacles hindering the operation of private businesses and lifting price controls on private-owned health and education services. At the same time, private businesses should be allowed to diversify their activities.

Caio Koch-Weser, the World Bank vice-president for the Middle East and North Africa, wrote that if Egypt's reform "is pursued with vigour and determination, it could form the basis for nothing less than an Egyptian economic miracle". He cited three main targets that must be reached by the second phase of economic reforms. The first of these is to "build business confidence in the depth and durability of reform". He proposed that this be achieved by moving forward with the reform of financial, legal and regulatory sectors.

Koch-Weser also highlighted the need to provide financing to small sector industries. Along with these basic reforms, he emphasised that the government should "continue the process of building competitiveness". Removing bureaucratic red tape, upgrading product quality, and controlling monopolies are crucial requirements in achieving this aim.

Furthermore, he maintained that a basis of cooperation between the government and the business community must be cultivated to ensure that "the fruits of growth are shared among all segments of society".

Ibrahim Shihata, vice-president and general counsel for the World Bank, presented an overview of Egypt's legal system. Speaking of Egypt's tax policy, Shihata said that it is characterised by "too many taxes, with excessive rates on high brackets of income and excessive exemptions". He also pointed out that tax legislation does not favour small-scale industries and tends to provide tax benefits and exemptions to large companies.

Hussein Ibrahim, chairman of the EBA's Economic Legislation Committee, suggested that "reward and punishment should be the underlying philosophy of any new labour legislation." He maintained that abiding by this principle will be the cornerstone of higher productivity and better quality.

Hazem Hassan, chairman of a major accounting firm in Egypt, assessed Egypt's taxation system. He stated that the government levies direct taxes rather than indirect taxes in order to increase revenues. He says "direct taxes are fairer and take into account the contributory ability of the taxpayer." In addition, he said that Egypt should reduce many of the tax exemptions it currently grants through the investment law, the new urban communities law and the tourism and reconstruction laws, because it is the taxpayers who foot the bill for these exemptions.

Reviewed by Niveen Wahish

### Investor-friendly laws

EIGHT new laws aimed at creating a more investment-friendly climate were submitted this week to the People's Assembly for discussion in its closing session next Saturday, reports Gamal Essam El-Din.

Topping the list of eight new laws submitted before the People's Assembly were two laws aimed at foreigners. The first law allows foreigners to own real estate provided that the area of the property does not exceed 4,000 cubic metres. Previously foreigners were not allowed to buy any building or land unless they had an Egyptian partner. The law also permits foreigners to pay in local currency. In the past they were obliged to pay in foreign currency.

The second law allows both Egyptians and foreigners to undertake the construction, operation and maintenance of highway roads for as long as 99 years. This piece of legislation is part and parcel of the government's efforts to attract larger investments in infrastructure projects, especially road construction in deserts. For decades, the construction of roads in Egypt has been monopolised by the state.

In addition to these two laws, six other laws were submitted to the parliament. These laws aim at relieving citizens of a number of financial burdens they are shouldering. The first of this group of laws is one that cancels a tax currently imposed on inheritance. The idea behind the new law is a hope that cancelling this tax would encourage those who inherit money to invest their funds in establishing new development projects. The second law in this group cancels one of the articles in income tax Law No. 70 of 1964. This article imposes a 5 per cent tax on real estate sales revenue. The tax, in the past, had discouraged buyers from registering their property transfer in the public notary's offices, and led to complicated disputes over ownership rights.

The third law modifies Law No. 114 of 1946. This will exempt citizens from paying any fees for the forms needed to document real estate in public notary offices. The fourth law also modifies Law No. 70 of 1964, reducing by half the fees charged for documenting a property in public notary offices. Both of the aforementioned laws are intended to facilitate documentation procedures, which were a source of frustration and irritation for citizens and investors alike.

The last law modifies the rules of the Presidential Decree No. 827 of 1975, and slashes through much of the red-tape citizens deal with in order to register their real estate. It also exempts them from paying fees to the Egyptian Geographical Survey Authority (EGSA) to get information needed to register their property. Prior to this law, citizens were required to go to the EGSA to obtain information such as the area and the location of their land, and then take this information to the office of the public notary. While going through these procedures, citizens were also required to pay a number of fees.

### Deal decree

IN AN effort to minimise the burden shouldered by investors on the stock market, the Ministry of Economy, Foreign Trade and International Cooperation issued a decree to decrease the fees paid by the investors to the stock market.

Decree 848 reduces the fees paid by investors for services rendered to them by the stock market. According to the new decree, investors pay LE125 for each LE1,000, and a maximum of LE250 for trading activity registered in the exchange. For those deals not registered in the exchange, investors will pay a minimum of LE1 for every LE1,000, with a maximum fee of LE5,000.

A Capital Market Authority (CMA) source said that a 50 per cent reduction in stock market fees will encourage investors to increase their dealing on the exchange. According to the new decree, fees will be collected by the brokerage houses from both the buyer and the seller. The trading houses then have three days in which they must deliver the fees to the exchange.

Mohamed Hamed, chairman of the Okaz Brokerage Company, said that he believes "this decree will encourage small investors more than large investors."

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### Securities merger

TWO LEADING financial services companies, the Egyptian Financial Group (EFG) and Hermes Financial, have recently agreed to merge their corporate finance and brokerage activities. The new company will be called EFG-Hermes, writes Niveen Wahish.

According to Mohamed Taymour, chairman of EFG, the merger will create a stronger institution that is able to compete with the international firms that are expected to enter the Egyptian market.

"The Egyptian market is getting to be of a size that is interesting to international firms. They are seriously considering setting up business in Egypt," Taymour said.

He said that the merger is not an attempt to monopolise the market — there are many other companies offering financial services in Egypt — but is an attempt to create an entity that is capable of standing on equal footing with its international counterparts.

Taymour said that, in the short-run, they expect to lose some of their market share because many clients like to deal with more than one company to get better rates and a better deal.

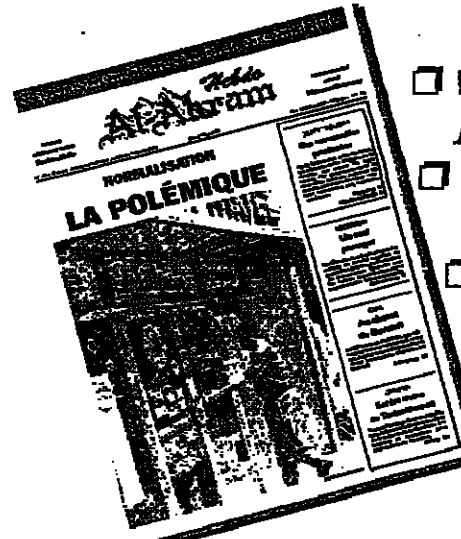
The merger, he added, will not affect the clientele of the other Egyptian companies. "The other financial firms deal with small investors who do not represent our clientele," he said. Most of the clients of EFG and Hermes are foreign and Arab institutions and large-scale individual investors.

Aly El-Tahri, one of the founders of Hermes Financial and head of the new company's Brokerage Division, explained that both companies decided to go through with the merger because they found that it is better to work on the same side and unite their efforts rather than compete.

The merger, Tahri said, will help the two companies avoid duplication and therefore improve quality. However, the fund management companies of both EFG and Hermes will remain separate. "This is because we found there is no incremental benefit to be gained by a merger," said Tahri. The fund management company affiliated to EFG is called the Egyptian Fund Management Group, while that of Hermes is called Hermes Fund Management.

Hermes Financial was founded in 1994, while EFG was founded in 1980. Their activities include asset management and securities brokerage.

Edited by Ghada Ragab



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Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and US president Bill Clinton walk across the Rose Garden after their meetings in the oval office of the White House last Tuesday (photo: Reuters)

## Arab-American dialogue

Cooperation or conflict? Arabs and Americans met to discuss the Arab-American relationship, the peace process and the future of the region. **Mona Makram Ebeid** participated

For the first time ever, the League of Arab States and the US Middle East Project of the Council of Foreign Relations jointly sponsored a symposium, held from 8-9 July, to promote a greater understanding of the issues that shape the Arab-American relationship.

The main objective was to try and develop a common perception of the future of the peace process in its various dimensions in the Middle East. As a participant in that dialogue, I will try to shed some light on the deliberations that took place.

It was clear from the discussions that both sides were still struggling to define, understand and come to terms with rapidly changing events in an even more rapidly changing world, whose direction was only perceived dimly. It was not surprising that none had yet developed a clear vision of the future or even an adequate road map for the next few miles. Concerning the peace process, and in the context of recent events and the statements made by the new Likud government, which have led to opportunities for divergence as well as cooperation, several questions needed to be addressed. Is the relationship between the US and the Arab world likely to become more cooperative or more conflictual? Can the areas of cooperation and conflict be identified? What critical interests and problems of each region are most likely to impinge on their foreign relations?

Despite the obvious convergence in interests regarding the Middle East peace process, the two sides had distinctive differences regarding aims and goals. Some specific ideas were floated by the Arab participants. The United States is now the sole superpower in the Middle East, a role that it seemingly embraces more with reluctance than relish. A key to understanding the present administration's actions is to be aware of the tension between those in the US who want a more active policy abroad on behalf of positive change, and practitioners of realpolitik, who want to constrain US involvement based on the criteria of US interests.

The success of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations convinced the Clinton administration to adopt a strategy of detachment. Accordingly, the US confined itself to acting largely as a facilitator for the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations and as a catalyst for mobilising international economic support to the Palestinian Authority. In the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty its role was limited to offering Jordan debt forgiveness and political support. However, it has put a lot of energy into negotiations between Syria and Israel. If these negotiations have not resulted in any success so far, it is not because of failed mediation efforts but rather because of strategic and domestic political considerations of both Syria and Israel.

However, with respect to the way the Arabs view the role of the US as a mediator, no one contested the importance of the US's continued role as an honest broker in the peace process, a role which has been vital in the current period. Both Israel and the Arab states have sought active US involvement in Arab-Israeli negotiations since 1967. But their vision of that role has differed sharply. Arab states hoped the US would press their dependent client, Israel, to accept Washington to facilitate bilateral negotiations with Arab states and guarantee emerging agreements.

Yet this very role has come under severe criticism for what is perceived as an unfair tilt towards Israel. One glaring example was Israel's threat to expropriate Arab land in Jerusalem, which prompted a UN Security Council meeting in which Washington cast its first Cold War veto, revealing the shortcomings of the US role in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. US support for Israel in the military operations in southern Lebanon and the pressure exerted on the Security Council not to issue any condemnation of Israel's role in the Qana massacre so as not to derail the peace process is another indication of bias.

A divergence of interests between the US and the Arab world has also been apparent in the security dimension. Although threats against Israel have greatly diminished since the end of the Cold War and Israel's involvement in the peace negotiations, the US commitment to retaining Israel's edge in defence forces and strengthening cooperative efforts continues to show itself in several aspects. Prominent among these has been US-Israeli strategic cooperation. Although in the past the US feared alienating its Arab allies by formalising the US-Israeli strategic relationship, it nevertheless elevated it to the level of a formal defence treaty during Peres' last visit to the US in April 1996. The argument used to press the US to formally build defence ties was that for the first time the US and Israel were both facing the same threat: proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism, and the 'rogue' regimes of Iran and Iraq.

Viewpoints differed on these four points, not so much on substance as on the way to confront these issues.

Moreover, in the context of Gulf security, it was assumed that Israel might be trying to become the extra force the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) needed to be an effective factor in the Gulf balance of power in a GCC-based joint security programme. To this end, it was suggested that the US might want to strengthen Israeli-Jordanian security relations in order to include Jordan, along with Israel, thereby spreading the burden of maintaining Gulf security.

Participants added that although the Gulf states and the North African countries have initiated bilateral ties with Israel, particularly in the sphere of economics, they are not willing to disregard Palestinian and Syrian sensitivities completely and move forward to full normalisation. Meanwhile, it appears that the Netanyahu government wants to deepen ties with the Gulf and North Africa, while maintaining a slower pace of change with the Palestinians and altering the framework of negotiations with Syria. In other words, the goal seems to be to 'delink' the core and the Arab periphery, a move that the US should try not to encourage, because further fragmentation of the peace process gives opponents more ammunition and time to thwart it.

In summary, the Arab participants emphasised the need to pursue the peace negotiations, and that the US should act as an arbitrator. The process, they said, should not be left 'on hold' as inaction might prove

very detrimental. Furthermore, no regional economic cooperation could take root before the attainment of an equitable solution to the conflict. For their part, most of the American participants chose to discuss the role of the US as a facilitator for the enhancement of economic reform and progress as a separate issue to the pursuance of the peace process.

The main argument presented by the American side, represented by Anthony H. Cordesman, the co-director of the Middle East Programme, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, was that the Arab-Israeli peace process may be a pre-condition for progress in some states, but that peace would do little to address the fundamental problems in the region. He stressed that these problems were not simply a result of the Likud victory or Syria's failure to move forward during 1994 and 1995. Peace, he maintained, would not bring prosperity. It would help Israel, although most of the growth in the Israeli economy came from trade with other regions. It has not prevented the real per capita income of Gaza and the West Bank from shrinking by 30 per cent from its level at the beginning of the Intifada, and it can only have a negligible impact on the structural economic problems of Egypt and Jordan.

Peace is an important condition for growth in Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Syria, the West Bank and Gaza, but peace and regional cooperation can only have a limited impact on the economic problems of these states and the region, compared to the desperate need for population control and international and national economic reform. Peace will have little effect on other Arab economies, particularly in cases where the formerly 'wealthy' oil economies have growing structural problems.

Further, one must be careful about the economic merits of peace and democracy. Every single successful case of sustained development since the end of World War II has been the result of a semi-authoritarian regime emphasising managed growth through the private sector. Many such cases, like South Korea and Taiwan have become steadily more democratic with time, but only after major development has occurred. Regional cooperation grows through development, development does not grow through regional cooperation.

As a second issue, Cordesman emphasised that 'the primary problem we all face is the failure of development'. US and Arab cooperation depended on reversing this situation. He drew attention to three decades of data warning of the steadily deteriorating global economic position of the Middle East. This deterioration accelerated during the period between the early 1980s and 1993, although it has eased recently and has actually been reversed in a few cases where Middle Eastern states have begun serious structural reforms: Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan and several of the southern Gulf states. However, the US State Department estimates that the real GNP of the Middle East grew by less than one per cent during 1983-1993, and real per capita income dropped by 26 per cent.

In contrast, the real GNP of the developing world as a whole grew by 73 per cent and real per capita income rose by 37 per cent. In East Asia, the leading developing region, the GDP grew by 73 per cent and real per capita income increased by 50 per cent. Real manufacturing wages in the Middle East have remained relatively constant for nearly 30 years, while they have increased by roughly 150 per cent in high growth regions like East Asia.

Population is at least as important to development as peace, Cordesman said. More than 40 per cent of the region's population is under 15 years of age and the number of young men and women entering its labour force increases by more than three per cent a year. Most face years of direct or disguised unemployment, and while it is easy to talk about Islamic extremism and terrorism in vague terms, the social, demographic, and economic causes are clear. These economic causes often interact with ethnic and sectarian problems, alienation and problems with governments. Therefore, Cordesman stressed, any Arab-American dialogue must emphasise development.

One of the most important results of the failure to develop, Cordesman said, was a decline in trade, and lack of development is leading to a steady decline in the economic importance of the Middle East in trade with the US and the rest of the world. The Middle East is the only region in the world to show a steady decline in the value of its exports over the last decade. For example, the value of Middle Eastern exports decreased by 25 per cent in real terms during the decade from 1983-1993, and shrank from 6.9 per cent of the world total in 1983 to 3.3 per cent in 1993 — a loss of 50 per cent of the Middle East's share of the global market in a decade. Modernisation, Cordesman stressed, means trade and global competitiveness.

This decline in economic importance does not mean a decline in the strategic importance of the region, but it will bring about important changes. The increase in demand for oil in the coming years will be driven largely by economic growth in Asia. In fact, there will be an 124 per cent increase in Asian energy demand between now to 2015.

Unless very dramatic economic reform happens, these shifts in demand will have major effects. Asia will become a major customer for oil from the Middle East, the fastest growing clients being developing Asian states. Division in wealth between oil exporting and non-exporting states in the Middle East will grow, and the percentage of trade with non-Arab states will grow from an already high 80 per cent plus level.

Cordesman concluded by telling his audience that this list of issues and problems might sound highly discouraging, and indeed the scenario looked grim if no action was taken. However, he added, the solutions were very clear.

Moderate population control and systematic economic reform could remove many of the most urgent problems within half a decade. Peace and diplomacy could stabilise proliferation and even roll it back. The one thing that would ensure that things got worse was to deny the reality of the problems and do nothing.

The writer is a political scientist and former member of parliament.

## False assumptions shared

During Binyamin Netanyahu's six day visit to the United States, PLO leader Yasser Arafat will be watching closely for any clue from the new Israeli prime minister on how his government intends to proceed with the peace process. The Palestinians are not alone in their concern.

The idea that the Arab world would regard Netanyahu's "peace for peace" formula as anything other than a surrender of their most basic national claims is a dangerous assumption — one that the US and Netanyahu appear to share, writes **Graham Usher**

On 8 July, the Syrian government newspaper, *Al-Baath*, commented that it would be "very helpful" if the US informed Netanyahu that "any rejection of the principles and basis of peace process" would mean "its destruction". The signs are both that Arafat and Syria are going to be disappointed.

US officials have made it clear that they see the trip to be little more than an opportunity for Clinton to "listen" to Netanyahu's views vis-à-vis the peace process. "This is not a session where we will extract deadlines," said one US source. But while the US president may not press Israel for any firm commitments, he is likely to want some idea of its "thinking". Netanyahu will give it.

On the Oslo process, say Israeli sources, Netanyahu will tell the US leader that his government will implement Oslo's interim agreement with the Palestinians, proceed with the final status negotiations and resume contacts with the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) "at all levels". He is also expected to pledge, "security considerations permitting", to ease the closure of the Occupied Territories and urge the World Bank to increase aid to the self-rule areas.

As for the matter of the Israeli army's stalled redeployment in Hebron, Netanyahu will commit himself to this also, "but in a way different to the Labour government". Nobody is sure yet what this means, and Netanyahu is unlikely to be more forthcoming in Washington. But sources say that Netanyahu's thinking on Hebron is in line with that of his new, internal security minister, Avigdor Kahanav.

This boils down to a "modified redeployment" where Israel will strengthen the Jewish presence in Hebron by building a

"territorial corridor" linking the 400 or so settlers who live in the city's heart to the 3,000 strong Jewish settlement of Kiryat Arba that rests on its outskirts. Since the corridor is yet to be built, Netanyahu may, in Washington, announce that redeployment in Hebron will occur, but without hitching the army to any timetable.

But concerning the substance of Likud's philosophy, Netanyahu will tell Clinton what he told the Israeli electorate, and which he rehearsed in an interview on Israeli radio hours before he flew to Washington: "Yes to a united Jerusalem, yes to secure peace on the Syrian front and yes to coexistence and security between us and the Palestinians." In other words, no to any compromise on Jerusalem, no withdrawal from the Golan Heights and no to a Palestinian state.

The Clinton administration is unlikely to challenge Netanyahu overtly on these matters, especially in a US election year. But the idea that the Palestinians and Arab states would confuse Netanyahu's "peace for peace" formulas as anything other than a surrender of their most basic national claims is an extremely dangerous assumption. It is one Netanyahu appears to share.

"What is happening is that the Arabs are adapting," said Netanyahu in the radio interview, "adapting to the reality and are being forced to begin to compromise on their side for a change."

The Palestinians and the Arabs are adapting to the fact of Likud's belligerence, but in ways that scarcely augur peace or compromise.

Since Netanyahu assumed office, Arafat has taken steps to repair some of the damage caused by his ruthless adoption of Israel's security policies during the last months of the Peres' government. In Gaza, informal meetings have taken place between the PNA and its main Islamist opposition, Hamas. Last month, Hamas' spokesperson in Gaza, Mahmoud Zahar, said his movement would be prepared to negotiate a ceasefire with Israel

"through the intermediary of the PNA". The condition was that the PNA release the 1,000 or so Palestinians interned in its jails.

Arafat appears to be listening. On 4 July, PNA spokesperson, Marwan Kanafani, said the PNA was "considering" the release of 600 Hamas and Islamic Jihad suspects rounded up after the suicide attacks earlier this year. The next day, the PNA freed 11 Hamas activists in the West Bank town of Jenin. Zahar lauded the gesture as "a positive step toward rebuilding national relations". This hardly amounts to a political alliance between Arafat and his Islamist opposition. But it does suggest a PNA strategy based on national unity rather than "adaptation" to Netanyahu's visions of coexistence.

But the real danger of Netanyahu's rejectionism lies on the Syrian track. On 26 June, three Israeli soldiers were killed in a cross-border ambush in the Jordan Valley. The attack was the work of the Damascus based Fatah Revolution faction of Mohammed Abu Musa. Israel viewed the operation as enjoying the connivance of Syria, and responded accordingly. It shelled Abu Musa's "base" in the Bekaa Valley. But the base also happened to be a Syrian army camp. The skirmish was a signal that the current cold war between Israel and Syria could easily heat up into a full-scale confrontation, probably in Lebanon, but this time without the proxies of Hizbollah and the Lebanese government.

It is unclear whether Netanyahu seeks direct confrontation with Syria. He has said that Syria should be grouped with Iran as a "terrorist state" and urged the international community to impose sanctions against it. He has also said that while Israel's retention of the Golan does not "assure a formal peace, it prevents actual war". What Likud may be seeking with Syria is an armistice, an ongoing state of no war and no peace. If so, Israel is forgetting its own history. For Israel had de facto armistices with the Arabs in 1948 and 1967. They brought neither peace nor adaptation; they brought wars.

## Palestinians will not renegotiate

Nabil Shaath, the minister of planning and international cooperation in the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), forcefully declared this week that the Palestinians will not renegotiate issues already dealt with and finalised. Shaath was categorically rejecting Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's proposals on Hebron and other issues that the Palestinians had agreed upon with the former Labour government.

The Israeli prime minister has taken with him to Washington a number of proposals for the partial redeployment of Israeli troops in Hebron. He is suggesting amendments to the original plan which would tighten the control of the Israeli army and of Israeli settlers over the city under the pretext of safeguarding Jewish areas. The proposals also aim to reinforce the bonds between the Kiryat Arba settlement, the Jewish settlers in the actual town of Hebron and the Ibrahim shrine. In other words, Netanyahu wants to maintain the potentially explosive status quo in Hebron.

The Palestinians are banking on Netanyahu's visit to Washington to bring about a détente in Israeli-Palestinian relations. A détente would require three things: a meeting between Arafat and Netanyahu; the implementation of the remaining stages of the redeployment plan, particularly in Hebron, and the safe passage plan between the West Bank and Gaza; and the resumption of the final-status negotiations between the two sides.

The Palestinian chief negotiator Mahmoud Abbas, better known as Abu Mazen, seems optimistic. He is expecting a meeting to be held between Arafat and Netanyahu upon the return of the Israeli prime minister from the United States. Abu Mazen said that he had been meeting with negotiators recognised by Israel. Among them is Mohamed Bassiouni,

Egypt's ambassador to Israel, who, in a recent meeting with Dore Gold, Netanyahu's chief security advisor, asked him to expedite a meeting between Netanyahu and the head of the PNA. Meanwhile, it has been noticed that the US consular-general in Jerusalem has held a series of meetings with Palestinian leaders recently.

Shaath notes that the representatives of US and European governments have been advising the Palestinians to be patient and hold their breath until the main features of Netanyahu's policy take shape. However, such advice has done little to dissipate the anxiety and gloominess which prevails in Palestinian circles regarding the intentions of the new Israeli government.

Certain officials in the PNA believe that much could be achieved if Washington was ready to bring to bear some pressure on Israel to respect its commitments under previous agreements. Such pressure, they believe, is possible even during an election year in the US. Other officials, however, believe that the American administration does not want anything more than to maintain the status quo. They neither expect progress in the negotiations nor an improved commitment on the part of the Israeli government. Unwillingness on the part of Washington to exert real pressure on Israel, they argue, will encourage Israel to resort to all sorts of verbal and political manoeuvring.

Believing that a tortuous stage in their negotiations with the new Israeli government lies ahead, the Palestinians are seeking to fill all possible gaps. They are concentrating their efforts on enhancing relations with Jordan and Egypt. During Arafat's recent visit to Jordan, an agreement regarding the necessity of close coordination between Jordan and the

Palestinians in the coming stage of negotiations was reached. It is expected that Jordan will mediate between Israel and the Palestinians to a certain extent.

Moreover, it seems that Palestinian apprehension about Jordan has been subsiding somewhat since last month's Cairo Arab Summit restrained certain Arab parties from racing to rally with Israel. Palestinians are hoping that Jordan will provide them with as much support as Egypt does. Syria's unyielding position, meanwhile, is seen as being necessary to draw international pressure on Israel.

Many Palestinians anticipate changes in the status quo. They believe that the new Israeli government will soon relax the military and economic blockade imposed on Gaza and the West Bank. However, it would be wrong to see such a move as a reconciliatory gesture towards the Palestinians. Rather it is a fundamental element of the Likud Party's ideology to reject Palestinian independence from Israel.

For the time being, Arafat's main concern is a meeting with Netanyahu, which could be a springboard for negotiations between the two leaders. Certain Palestinian circles believe that Netanyahu may agree to hold such a meeting with Arafat in order to project a positive image of his government. However, Netanyahu, they argue, will continue to be intransigent in real terms. In short, political manoeuvring looks set to be the only game played on the Palestinian-Israeli track for a while.

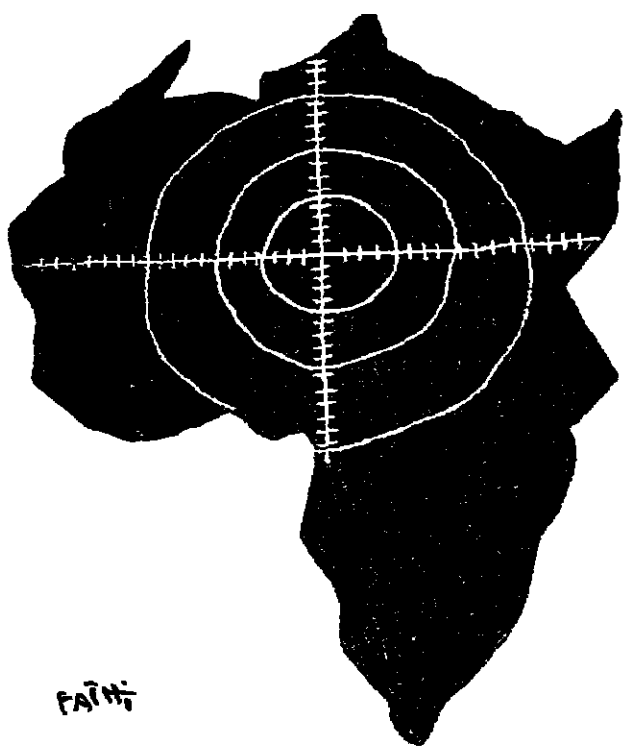
A source close to Arafat told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that apprehension will dominate the general mood among Palestinians until after Netanyahu has met Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Mubarak has visited Washington and met US President Bill Clinton.

Palestinians will reject any proposal made by Binyamin Netanyahu to amend agreements already made between the two sides, writes **Tarek Hassan** from Gaza



# Africa tires of old show

The annual OAU summit is Africa's most important political event, but are the continent's leaders tired of parading the old uncertainties, asks Gamal Nkrumah



A Cameroonian soldier guards the conference centre where African leaders are assembled for the 32nd OAU summit meeting (photo: AP)

Precious little hung on the Organisation of African Unity's (OAU) summit meeting in the Cameroonian capital Yaoundé save perhaps the fate of United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Ghali. In Yaoundé, African leaders spent long hours in 'closed-door' sessions in order to resolve the question of Ghali's candidacy.

If the measure of a summit meeting's worth is the number of heads of state in attendance, then surely something was terribly amiss in Yaoundé. Some 23 out of the 53 member nations' heads of state attended. Key presidents stayed away. Those attending appeared to be in a hurry to leave. South Africa's President Nelson Mandela left Yaoundé after attending the opening session for a highly publicised official visit to Britain. The continent's leaders were acutely aware that few people were waiting with baited breath for the final communiqué. Their national and their Western donors certainly weren't.

The economies of the continent and all grandiose projects have been put in limbo until funding is approved by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Host nation Cameroon, in an unprecedented move, took the decision to house only the visiting heads of state and foreign ministers at state expense. All other OAU delegates scrambled for cheaper hotel accommodation in the Cameroonian capital. Such a pitiable spectacle was unheard of only a decade ago.

Perhaps the most horrifying alarm bells were the impressions given by the assembled heads of state that very few of them had the strength to correct the wrongs of the past. They, once again, made their ritual soliloquies. They vowed solemnly to carry out their promises of ending civil wars, correcting economic mistakes, privatising Africa's burdensome public sector, deregulating the continent's cumbersome economies, institutionalising political liberalisation and democratisation, and ensuring con-

tinental economic integration. Few, inside or outside the continent, felt that the 32nd annual gathering marked a significant watershed.

"While the OAU has often championed the lofty ideals of unity, cooperation, economic development, human rights and other worthy objectives, it has failed to seriously work for their concrete realisation," complained Eritrean President Isaias Aferwerki during the 1993 OAU summit meeting. Still, all was not gloom and doom.

There were exciting goings-on. United States under-secretary of state for African Affairs, George Moose, was in Yaoundé to lobby against Ghali's candidacy. Helmut Cohen, another of Washington's old Africa hands, was in Cameroon too. But Ghali sounded unperturbed by America's politicking. "This is certainly not a regional endorsement of Boutros Ghali by the OAU," said US State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns, referring to the pan-African grouping's non-committal declaration on Ghali's candidacy, on Tuesday in Washington. So are Ghana's Kofi Annan and Niger's Hamid Al-Ghabid in the running for the post of UN secretary-general? Spurious statements flew about the place and curious spectators are none the wiser.

"How do you promote continental unity when there is no national unity?" wondered the director of the Centre for Human Rights in Nigeria, Adekunle Owoade. The officially bilingual host nation exemplified the continent's dilemma. As African leaders headed for the conference centre, Anglophone Cameroonians protested their domination by their Francophone compatriots and demanded that the south-western Anglophone regions of Cameroon bordering Nigeria enjoy full autonomy.

Nigeria and Cameroon have not resolved a serious border dispute over the oil-rich Bakassi Peninsula. The 1,000 square kilometre peninsula has been a bone of contention between the two West African states for some years now. The conflict has

been exacerbated because Cameroon accuses Nigeria of lending tacit support to Cameroonian Anglophone separatists.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, is said to be backing Niger's proposal to replace Boutros Ghali with the secretary-general of the Islamic Conference Organisation, Hamid Al-Ghabid. Niger is embroiled in a brouhaha over election results held last week. The country's military ruler, General Ibrahim Mainassara, declared himself the winner and claimed to have captured 52 per cent of the vote. Opposition parties dispute the result. The predominantly Muslim West African nation's democratically elected president, Mahamane Ousmana, was ousted from power by a coup d'état by General Mainassara last year. Mainassara dissolved the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) on Monday and replaced it with a rubber-stamp one. Ousmana got a paltry 20 per cent of the vote, according to the new electoral commission. Labour unions in the former French colony are up in arms. "In order to defend and above all preserve democracy, we have decided to embark on an indefinite strike until the CENI is reinstated and the entire polling process is reorganised," the secretary-general of the Federation of Labour Unions of Niger, Ibrahim Mayaki, warned on Tuesday. The sad debate highlighted the continent's faltering steps towards democratisation, urged on by its Western donors.

The OAU's caution is understandable. It has little clout. The key theme of the Yaoundé summit was expected to be the economic integration of Africa. Instead it turned out that delegates became bogged down in the choice of a UN secretary-general. Friction, too, forced its way to the top of the 32nd OAU summit's agenda. Talk about how to end the numerous civil wars raging across the continent took up much of the deliberations.

Perhaps not all the spanners in the works have

been of America's doing, but most of the nastiest ones have been: witness the crises in Liberia and Somalia. If the Americans had let General Mohamed Farah Aidid be in Somalia and Charles Taylor have his way in Liberia, the civil wars there would never have escalated and caused so much heartache and suffering. In both instances, as in Angola, American intervention directly intensified the war situation.

The OAU's budget has stood at a static \$30 million for the past three decades. In Yaoundé, the continent's leaders knew all too well that their countries could ill afford to foot the pan-African organisation's bills, let alone pay for extra peacekeeping activities.

Meanwhile, Africa's economic fortunes have not greatly improved. The average fiscal deficit of African countries actually widened in the 1990s despite the fact that many African nations instituted wide-ranging and radical macro-economic policy changes and structural adjustment programmes that left them facing widespread social discontent which, in turn, led to social unrest. Most of the adjustment has been in the form of lower capital expenditure. According to the IMF's *World Economic Outlook 1996*, "The ratio of current government expenditure to GDP [gross domestic product] increased by over two percentage points in the 1990-95 period, while the ratio of capital expenditure to GDP was marginally lower than in the 1980s."

Falling commodity prices on the international markets led to considerable declines in terms of trade for sub-Saharan African countries — most of whom rely on the export of primary raw materials, tropical agricultural and mineral products. Commodities such as cocoa, coffee, tea, diamonds, gold and uranium remain the primary sources of foreign exchange earnings. African economies remain as vulnerable to fluctuations in the international prices of primary commod-

ities as they were in the 1950s and 1960s.

The IMF counselled that privatisation should reduce the incentive for African governments to subsidise and fund unprofitable state enterprises. The IMF report warned that cosmetic changes did not radically alter the continent's basic economic predicaments. "In Kenya, for example, losses of the National Cereals and Produce Board during the 1980s — equivalent to about five per cent of GDP a year — were eventually, though contemporaneously, borne by the central government." *World Economic Outlook 1996* disclosed. Furthermore, the IMF publication revealed that reductions in the central governments' fiscal balance often paint a misleading picture of the true evolution of the public sector's overall financial position. In Senegal, it said, "while direct operational subsidies provided by the central government declined between 1985 and 1989, there was a large rise in central government overdrafts with quasi-public financial institutions. In such cases, the appearance of fiscal discipline in the central government's accounts may be illusory, and an apparent improvement in the fiscal position may not promote macro-economic stability simply because the public sector's long-term financing requirement may fail to improve or may even deteriorate."

Contrary to widespread belief, Africa's economic collapse in the early 1980s was not sudden. The continent's leaders ignored the warning signs. Sadly, their attempts to salvage what they could of Africa's economic possibilities were not very well thought through either. Piecemeal applications of the IMF-instigated policies were institutionalised in the 1990s. The economic crisis was kept on the back burner. They caused much pain — specifically for the continent's poorest and neediest — and inevitably and invariably resulted in social unrest. In a few cases they fuelled social disintegration, ethnic strife and civil wars.

## South Asia's arms race

Does the change of government in New Delhi present an opportunity for a halt to the arms race between India and Pakistan, wonders Galal Nassar

During her trip to Washington last year, Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto received assurances from United States President Bill Clinton that he would do his best to reimburse Pakistan for 28 F-16 aircraft that were embargoed by the US even though Pakistan had paid for them in 1990.

The Pressler Amendment, sponsored by Republican Senator Larry Pressler, led to a halt of all US aid to Pakistan in 1990 after then President George Bush failed to certify that Islamabad did not possess nuclear weapons. Pakistan refused to scrap its nuclear programme, insisting that it was intended for peaceful purposes only.

The introduction of the Brown Amendment, a revision of the Pressler Amendment, reflects a reassessment of US policy towards its one-time close ally, Pakistan. It allows Washington to make a few arms shipments to Pakistan for the first time in five years. Islamabad was relieved. New Delhi was not amused.

Hopes had arisen that, with the end of the Cold War, peace would return to the trouble spots of South Asia. But it appears that there are international forces at work that want to stir up communal and ethnic conflicts in India and Pakistan. Tensions in the South Asian region are a tremendous drain on the resources of both India and Pakistan.

India is suspicious of Pakistan's nuclear programme and Pakistan is concerned about India's nuclear capability. The deployment of M-11 missiles by Pakistan has got the Indians worried. India has reiterated that it will take all necessary steps to safeguard its security and national interests.

In June, sources at the Pakistani Ministry of Defence disclosed that Pakistan had purchased 40 used French Mirage-3 fighter planes with a value of \$120 million. Pakistan is expected to receive the first batch of six planes next August, and the remaining quantity will arrive in instalments over a period of a year and a half. It is known that Pakistan uses French Mirage-3 and Mirage-5 fighter jets, and that it bought 50 Mirage planes from Australia in 1989. Islamabad is currently negotiating with the French company Dassault to purchase a number of the ultra-modern Mirage-2000 S.

The arms race in South Asia is heating up. But there are high hopes that the reconciliatory moves

which have been made between India and Pakistan since H D Deve Gowda and his government came to power in New Delhi will end this anachronistic legacy of the Cold War.

Tension between India and Pakistan reached a climax recently after two missiles were fired on a Kashmiri mosque, killing 22 people. This event was followed by border skirmishes that led to the death of five civilians. Pakistani leaders then vowed to enter an arms race with India if the latter continued to develop its advanced missile programme. India went ahead with 15 tests of medium-range surface-to-surface missile Pithvi-2, which is capable of carrying nuclear heads.

The US criticised India's tests. Washington urged both countries to abandon the arms race, especially as India has aimed a number of its missiles in Pakistan's direction. Most of Pakistan's cities are within the range of Indian missiles. India and Russia signed a long-term programme to cooperate in defence matters and India is eager to purchase Russian Sukhoi-30 combat aircraft. Some analysts believe that the defence cooperation between India and Russia must be seen in the light of Pakistan's attempts to acquire weapons that will improve its military capability. Islamabad recently purchased Chinese M-11 missiles.

In September 1995 the US Senate approved an arms deal with Pakistan valued at \$370 million. Washington, meanwhile, refuses to sell India sophisticated weapons. India warned that it would seek the acquisition of advanced military technology to match that supplied by the US to Pakistan. Some Indian military experts say that the American weapons shipment to Pakistan, which includes missiles and long-range fighter jets, will make easy targets of India's naval bases. America's Central Intelligence Agency warned that if a nuclear war ever erupted it would be one between India and Pakistan. Both countries have the ability to manufacture nuclear warheads. Both countries are developing nuclear missiles that are capable of hitting each other's cities.

Does Washington want to stop the armaments race in South Asia? American aid was used in the past to convince Pakistan to go back on its plans to manufacture a nuclear bomb. Many Western military analysts see that something must be done, to reduce the nuclear arms race in South Asia.

The US could stipulate that it would continue to send aid and sell weapons to Pakistan only if the latter agreed to two conditions. One, that Pakistan must agree to international monitoring for all its nuclear establishments. Two, that it must stop all testing and development of nuclear missiles. India, analysts say, could also be pressured, since it wants to increase trade links with the US especially in the field of high technology. In addition, India needs nuclear fuel and technical help to upgrade its nuclear power stations. Making a deal with India would be easier if China stopped selling nuclear missile components to Pakistan and withdrew the nuclear missiles it has deployed at its border with India. Building trust and reducing war threats between India and Pakistan is essential if permanent peace is to be realised between the two South Asian neighbours. Both sides must realise that nuclear weapons will not make them secure. And if the majority of the Indian people, according to opinion polls, support nuclear testing, then the Deve Gowda government must resist these internal pressures, especially as these tests will negatively affect India's status among the other developing nations of the South, most of whom oppose any nuclear testing. India appreciates the support of many of these countries in its dispute with Pakistan.

India refused to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which differentiates between the five official nuclear powers and other non-nuclear countries. India is aware that American scientists have invented methods of testing nuclear bombs without detonating nuclear devices. The US, moreover, is determined to continue such tests even after a global testing ban is reached.

The US was worried when its satellites recorded unusual activity in the area where India made its first nuclear test in 1974. Now India experiments with local-made Pithvi missiles at the site. These missiles can carry nuclear heads for short distances only. A few years ago, China sold Pakistan M-11 missiles. But the US persuaded Pakistan to leave the missiles untouched in their boxes and thus avoid the trade sanctions threatened by the US Congress. However, if India develops further its Pithvi missiles, then Pakistan will use the Chinese M-11 missiles. The Americans might then impose trade sanctions against both China and Pakistan.



A Muslim Kashmiri woman clad in the traditional burka flees her homeland, Kashmir, India's only Muslim majority state, has become the focus of tensions between India and Pakistan (photo: Reuters)



# Communism's final burial?

**Abdel-Malek Khalil** in Moscow compares and contrasts the two men who fought in the run-off for the Russian presidency

Incumbent Russian President Boris Yeltsin was not at his best healthwise during the last few days of the presidential campaign. His heart played up again. He regarded the presidential elections as "free Russia's difficult and responsible test of maturity". Yeltsin came first in the presidential election on 16 June with 35.28 per cent of the votes, three points ahead of his Communist rival, Gennady Zyuganov. But over 50 per cent of the votes were necessary to win the election outright in the first round. For the 3 July run-off against Zyuganov, Yeltsin enlisted the help of right-wing retired General Aleksandr Lebed.

Yeltsin was born into a peasant family on 1 February 1931 in the village of Butkain in the Talitsa district of the Russian region of Sverdlovsk. He was a member of the now defunct Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) from 1961 to 1990 and rose quickly through its ranks. He was a party official from 1968 to 1987. He headed the Construction Department of the Sverdlovsk CPSU Committee, before becoming the committee's first secretary and then first secretary of the Moscow City CPSU Committee. He was promoted to chairman

of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation from 1989 to 1990. At the height of his power in the CPSU hierarchical structure, and during its 28th Congress, Yeltsin made the brazen move of resigning from the party. Many say that that was when it was clear that the CPSU was heading for disaster and dissolution.

Security arrangements for the election run-off were extremely tight in Moscow and all the provincial capitals of the vast Russian Federation. There are many Russians who resent Yeltsin's rise to power and his doing battle with the Communists. Yeltsin had promised the earth, and many of Russia's young believed him. "Allow us to stop the growth of prices, to ensure the welfare of the Russian family," he pleaded with the electorate. He promised to turn Russia's beleaguered monetary unit, the rouble, into a hard currency by the year 2000. The old were sceptical.

Yeltsin's rival, Gennady Zyuganov, won the hearts and minds of Russia's elderly and the poor. Zyuganov was especially

popular in the southern regions of the Russian Federation, while Yeltsin was dominant in the northern and eastern parts of Russia as well as in the country's big cities. Zyuganov, born on 26 June 1944, does not suffer from the many ailments Yeltsin is afflicted with. He was born in a small village in the Oryol region of Russia and graduated from the Oryol State Pedagogical Institute in 1969. From the tender age of 23, Zyuganov was a member of the Young Communist League and was very active in the CPSU. Zyuganov

later became deputy chief of the Ideology Department of the CPSU Central Committee and remained loyal to the principles of Communism after the demise of the Soviet Union. The disgruntled elements in Russia — and there are many — all rallied behind Zyuganov. Yeltsin had presided over the disintegration of the Soviet Union and wreaked havoc on the Russian economy. Zyuganov's supporters say. In the end Yeltsin's supporters won the day. Yeltsin was re-elected and Communism failed to make a triumphant return.



photo: Reuters

## Better in the red than Red

A victory for democracy is how the result of the Russian presidential run-off election has been hailed. For 'democracy' read an indebted Yeltsin-style autocracy, writes **Faiza Rady**

Although the presidential run-off campaign between Boris Yeltsin and his Communist challenger, Gennady Zyuganov, officially closed on 2 July, the largely pro-Yeltsin media continued to beat the anti-Communist war drum until the bitter end. "Even the Mongolians have given up Communism," read the front-page banner headline of the prominent Moscow daily *Moskovsky Komsomolets* on the eve of the elections. "Are we stupider?"

According to the paper's logic, election results proved that 40.3 per cent of the Russian electorate — or some 30 million people — were indeed even "stupider" than the Mongolians for having voted Communist on 3 July. Moreover, one may safely presume that the 53.7 per cent who voted Yeltsin back into power, acted reasonably and rationally.

Northern governments, along with the Russian media, hailed Yeltsin's re-election as a victory for "democracy" and "freedom" as the prices of shares in Russian privatised companies surged by up to 15 per cent. "The concept 'democracy' is understood to mean acceptance of the market discipline favoured by Western investors... like the capitalist reforms advocated by the autocratic Boris Yeltsin, a leading 'democrat' by virtue of his advocacy of policies that are beneficial to Western investors," explains prominent linguist and political analyst Noam Chomsky. Hence, US President Bill Clinton praised the Russian people for the "historic achievement" of turning their backs on "tyranny". Other Western countries like France, Germany and Britain echoed the American position with more conventionally pious statements about the "victory of democracy" under Yeltsin.

In Russia, the much lauded "democracy" will be closer to a Yeltsin-style version of totalitarianism for lack of a better definition. Under Yeltsin's 1993 constitution, the president can bypass the legislative and rule by decree. Yeltsin dissolved the parliament in a hail of gun and tank fire in October 1993, and pushed through a referendum granting him vast presidential powers two months later.

During this year's presidential campaign, Yeltsin mostly used presidential decrees to bribe his electorate with unexpected largesse or by issuing new laws. No-

body could keep count of the handouts: three billion roubles to build a new church in Stavropol, 60 billion roubles for electronics factories in Zelenograd, 133 billion roubles for the miners in Vorkuta who had not received their pay cheques in many months. Yeltsin pledged so much money on the campaign trail that his economy minister, Yevgeny Yassin, publicly denounced him for derailing the government budget.

Now that Yeltsin is comfortably back in office, he cannot pay up. This year, government revenue has decreased by more than 40 per cent because of yet another form of presidential bribe. In exchange for corporate political support, Yeltsin agreed to go easy on tax collections. To avoid a huge budget deficit due to shrinking revenues, the government had to borrow on the Treasury Bill Market, paying interest rates of more than 200 per cent. Consequently, Yeltsin's hasty campaign pledges will most certainly be broken and workers can once again expect to subsist on rationed food stamps rather than pay cheques.

Presidential campaign decrees were issued even more blatantly than money pledges. In a desperate scramble for additional votes, Yeltsin haphazardly signed decrees anywhere he went: on the side of an armoured personnel carrier in Grozny, or at the entrance of a mine shaft. "Even when campaigning was officially banned on the eve of the elections, the president was still at it, firing off laws regulating the stock market," reported the *Independent*.

Throughout the campaign, freedom of expression — presumably an essential tenet of democracy — was reduced to Communist-bashing and a constant barrage of media propaganda and disinformation. Manufacturing consent for his second term in office was the name of the not too subtle game Yeltsin played. After he fired the director of a television station that had aired some criticism of his disastrous economic reform programme, the other networks got the message and tirelessly toed the official line. "TV networks that [had] often blasted Yeltsin over [the war in] Chechnya were firmly in his corner," reported *Newsweek*. Moreover, the general manager of NTV, an important public network, did not find it necessary to resign his job when Yeltsin hired him as his chief media campaign advisor. Conflict of in-

terests became irrelevant on the campaign trail.

Commenting on Zyuganov's defeat, Alexander V. Ruskoi — a former vice-president under Yeltsin — explained that "a nail was being driven into people's minds: anti-Communism". "Millions of copies of a propaganda sheet called 'Ne Dai Bog' (God Forbid) have been stuffed into people's boxes, displaying pictures of Stalin's victims hanging in a public square," reported the *Independent*. And until the eve of the elections, the networks were saturated with Yeltsin ads interspersed with horror tales of the Stalin-era gulags. "When I switched on the TV, I had the impression Stalin had died yesterday," commented a news analyst.

Meanwhile, many Zyuganov ads were kept off the air. The latest such incident occurred on the eve of the elections when Russian Public Television (ORT), the most powerful station reaching viewers throughout the former Soviet Union, refused to air an ad raising Communist concerns about potential election fraud. ORT even ignored an order from the Central Election Commission to broadcast the spot. Addressing a press conference with Zyuganov's campaign manager, prominent filmmaker Stanislav Govorukhin accused Russian TV of imposing a media blackout on the Communist campaign. "We have returned into the era of the darkest obscurantism and political censorship," commented Govorukhin.

The print media did not lag far behind the electronic one, reported the *Washington Post*, claiming that Yeltsin's campaign and its financial backers had spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to bribe and influence Russian journalists to push the anti-Communist line. The *Post* cited as its sources journalists, media executives, politicians and even consultants to the Yeltsin campaign. "Working in conjunction with an array of private firms, including public relations agencies, the campaign and its backers have arranged for payoffs to journalists ranging from thousands of dollars a month for the most recognised reporters from major Moscow newspapers to \$100 for a freelance piece by a novice ghostwriter for a provincial newspaper," wrote the *Post*. In an interview, a young Moscow journalist speaking on condition of anonymity said that he was bribed

with several thousand dollars to defame Zyuganov and the Communist Party in his articles and revive the big Red scare. "Of course, reporters aren't stupid. We understand this is corruption," he said. "But in comparison with what we know about corruption in government, this doesn't seem like much."

Considering Yeltsin's disastrous December approval ratings of six per cent and his narrow 35 per cent gain over Zyuganov's 32 per cent in the first election round, last week's run-off victory represents a real achievement. Besides buying off voters and running a disinformation campaign, Yeltsin swiftly capitalised on General Aleksandr Lebed's emergence as a strong third candidate with a 14.5 per cent election share, representing 11 million voters. Immediately appointing Lebed as security advisor and secretary of the powerful Security Council, Yeltsin granted him full powers to reshuffle the presidential entourage. Lebed, in turn, did not waste any time. On his first day at work he sacked Defence Minister General Pavel Grachev, the "Mercedes Pasha" known for his corruption and notorious for engineering the bloody war in Chechnya. On the third day, Yeltsin's trusted bodyguard General Alexander Korzhakov and his security chief General Mikhail Barsukov were fired and, on the eighth day, another seven generals had to go.

Lebed also marked his political distance from Yeltsin in his contentious public statements, often embarrassing the Kremlin. Last week, he accused the Russian economy of plundering the country's resources and admonished them to start contributing to the national economy. Claiming that oil and gas executives had teamed up with major banks to maintain a monopoly similar to that enjoyed by the military-industrial complex in the former Soviet Union, Lebed also implicated the political establishment. "The energy barons have acquired overwhelming influence in the government and the president's entourage and feel so independent of the state that they have started pursuing their budgetary, financial and regional policy," said Lebed. "Today one cannot simply steal — it is time to pay off debts, otherwise the country will disintegrate and bury everybody in the ruins." A forecast for Russia's future under Yeltsin's much touted democracy? Time will tell.

### Jiang woos Central Asia

CHINESE President Jiang Zemin finished a five-day tour of former Soviet republics in Central Asia this week, after visiting Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Jiang signed several trade accords with his Uzbek counterpart, Islam Karimov, and the two leaders pledged to sign several more on import taxes and road transport. Jiang and Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed agreements on export quality control, bank cooperation and prisoner exchanges between China and Kazakhstan. The Chinese president was in Almaty, the Kazakh capital, on his first visit to the former Soviet republic. Jiang offered Kazakhstan three million yuan (\$375,000) in goods "as a neighbourly gift".

Kazakhstan and China, in a joint declaration signed by Jiang and Nazarbayev, emphasised that they would not allow any separatist group to act on their territory against the integrity of the other country. The statement was alluding to ethnic Uighur separatist groups in the Chinese province of Xinjiang, which borders Kazakhstan and is home to a large number of Muslim minorities. Some of the Uighur groups have taken up arms and are leading a clandestine battle for the creation of an "Uighuristan" independent of Beijing. Uighur factions exiled in Kazakhstan are backing them. Jiang's tour was a follow-up to the Shanghai summit on 26 April, when leaders signed a treaty to demilitarise the borders between Beijing and former Soviet republics contiguous with China.

### Caribbean fears 'new colonialism'

CARIBBEAN leaders, gathered in Bridgetown, the capital of Barbados, last week for a four-day meeting, were warned that they might see a "new colonialism" if the region fails to maintain unity in the new world order of huge trade blocs. The Caribbean Community (Caricom) could become marginalised within the global economy if it does not get its act together quickly, they were told. The subject of colonialism affects all 14 member states of Caricom, which attended the summit. Twelve are independent former British colonies, one is a British territory, and Surinam is a former Dutch colony.

The creation of a single market, economy and financial system, under discussion since 1989, was the key issue on the agenda of the four-day meeting. Caricom leaders agreed to remove non-tariff barriers on intra-regional trade by December and approved a measure to add artists, musicians and media workers to the list of individuals who enjoy freedom of movement within the community. Other international issues with which Caricom states are grappling include hemispheric free trade and marginalisation of the region in US foreign policy.

Caricom opened its 17th summit by focusing on the risk of divisions within the 14-state group, an issue highlighted by the threatened break-up of St Kitts and Nevis. The Commonwealth is sending an envoy to mediate in the dispute. Caricom, representing a total of about six million people, comprises Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, Surinam, Trinidad and Tobago, St Lucia, St Kitts and Nevis, and St Vincent and the Grenadines.

### Violence at Orange march

NORTHERN Irish Protestants, determined to march through a Catholic enclave, threw stones, bottles and fireworks at riot police on the second day of a round-the-clock stand-off this week. The police, who had banned the march from entering Catholic areas, fired plastic bullets at demonstrators who tried to cut through barbed-wire barriers.

Leaders of the Orange Order, Ulster's most influential Protestant group, vowed to hold their ground for days if necessary to win the battle of wills at Drumcree Church near Portadown, 25 miles southwest of Belfast.

More than 100,000 members of the Orange Order and their supporters throughout the province have threatened civil disobedience unless several hundred Orangemen are allowed to march the Portadown route under police protection, as usually happens each year. Orangemen march each July and August to commemorate 17th century victories by the Protestant King William of Orange over the deposed Catholic King James II.

Last year, the police banned the march, provoking violence which was calmed by a compromise that permitted the Orangemen to take their route, but without flags, chants or fanfare. Both sides acquiesced, but neither was happy.

Compiled by Heba Samir

## Karadzic's bluffs

**Radovan Karadzic, the indicted Bosnian Serb war criminal, is playing cat and mouse with the international community**

Defying the international community again, Radovan Karadzic's headline Serb nationalist party has asked him to run in Bosnia's elections in September, reports Dina Abdel-Hafeez. The Bosnian Serb news agency said that the new leadership of the ruling Serb Democratic Party (SDS) unanimously asked Karadzic to run for president of the Serb entity in post-war Bosnia — the Republika Srpska. It gave no word of whether Karadzic accepted. The Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe, which has the job of running polls in Bosnia, declared that the country would be ready for the elections on 14 September. According to the Dayton peace accords, an indicted war criminal such as Karadzic can neither hold public office nor stand in elections.

The International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia has examined evidence and heard testimonies by eye-witnesses relating to the war crimes charges brought against Karadzic. The first charge-sheet relates to a string of crimes against humanity during the start of the Bosnian conflict in April 1992 and July 1995. Karadzic is accused of implementing policies resulting in the illegal detention of Muslims and Croats in concentration camps, the systematic rape and torture of thousands of people and the destruction of religious sites.

The charge-sheet also holds him directly responsible for the stand-off between the Bosnian Serbs and the United Nations in May and June 1995 in which around 284 UN personnel were taken hostage and some used as human shields in order to avert NATO air strikes. Finally, the indictment accuses Karadzic of directing the systematic bombing of civilian targets in Sarajevo over a three-year period and holds him responsible by his act of non-intervention for the campaign of sniper fire in the capital. Shelling and sniper fire left an estimated 10,000 people dead in Sarajevo during the Bosnian conflict.

As many as 8,000 Muslim men from the UN safe haven of Srebrenica were round up by Bosnian Serbs after the city fell last year and are believed to have been executed and buried in mass graves. Karadzic is accused of being responsible for this as well. Tribunal judge Fued Ried said when announcing the charges that a truly terrible massacre of the Muslim population appeared to have taken place. He added that the evidence presented by the prosecutor described scenes of unimaginable savagery: thousands of men executed and buried in mass graves, hundreds of men buried alive, men and women mutilated and slaughtered. "These are true scenes from hell written on the darkest pages of human history," he said.

Bosnian Prime Minister Hasan Muratovic warned that Muslims and Croats would boycott planned elections if Radovan Karadzic tried to run for president. His nomination has set alarm bells ringing among Muslim and Croat politicians. "No citizen of the [Muslim-Croat] federation would agree to vote in an election in which Karadzic is participating," the Bosnian prime minister said. Karadzic is also under pressure from Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic who seems serious about wanting him to step out of the political arena. Milosevic has threatened the Bosnian Serb government with unspecified reprisals if Karadzic

refuses to yield to international pressure. Milosevic fears that Serbia could face renewed UN sanctions if Belgrade fails to have Karadzic removed from positions of power.

Karadzic's party along with other Bosnian Serb radicals continue to control most media and electorate loyalties and are predicted to win most of the Bosnian Serb vote. Even if Karadzic does not run, his followers are expected to continue his nationalist and separatist policies, reducing the possibility for progress towards the goal of a Bosnia that transcends ethnic differences and shares common goals.

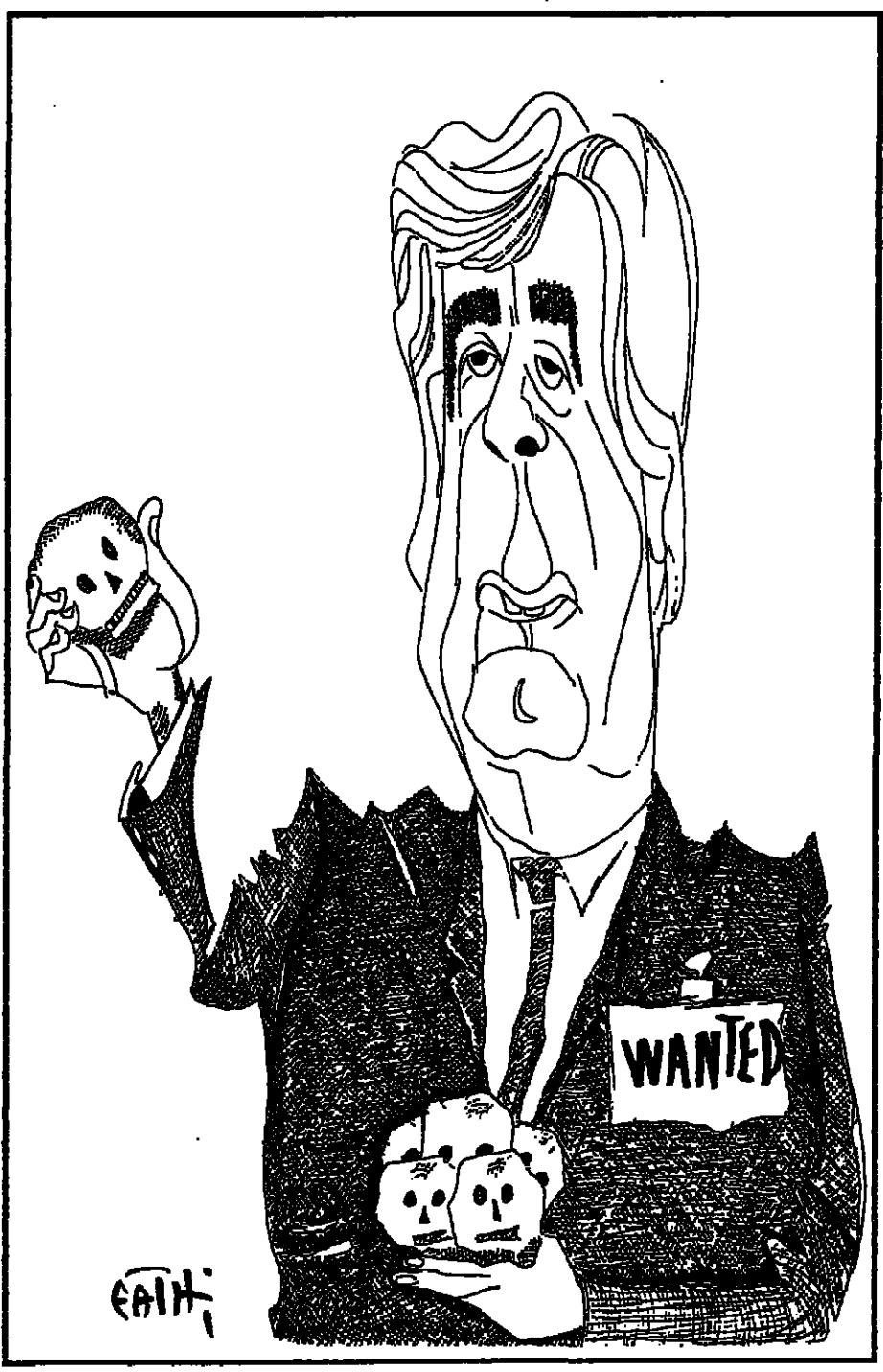
Only on 30 June did Karadzic bow to international pressure and formally step aside as Bosnian Serb leader, turning his powers over to a hardline nationalist deputy, Biljana Plavsic, but retaining the title of president and remaining head of the ruling SDS. It appears likely that Karadzic will continue to pull the strings from behind the scenes. International officials say that they would closely monitor Bosnian Serb politics for signs that Karadzic was still calling the shots, but acknowledged that the resignation of Karadzic was official and unconditional.

International envoy Carl Bildt warned that tough measures would follow if war crimes suspect Karadzic exercised any presidential powers in the Serb entity of Bosnia. Bildt declined to say what measures would be taken. The international community has been pressing Karadzic to quit office and hand himself in to the UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague to be judged on war crimes charges. But the nations setting the agenda of the NATO-led peacekeeping force in Bosnia, notably the United States, Britain and France, have until now been unwilling to risk casualties that might come from an attempt to arrest Karadzic.

Michael Steiner, Bildt's deputy, told reporters that he was concerned because Karadzic had been re-elected as head of the extreme nationalist SDS, which is clearly a public function from which he is banned by the Dayton peace accords. The Group of Seven leaders meeting in Lyon, France, last month called for Karadzic to resign and face trial. Steiner said that it was now up to the international community to follow up its words with actions, the only language understood in Pale, the Serb capital of Bosnia. Diplomats in Pale expect Karadzic not to run for office but to continue to exercise influence from behind the scenes.

Russia, which contributes 1,500 troops to the peacekeeping force and patrols key areas of Bosnian Serb territory, made its intentions clear that it does not want force to be used to arrest Karadzic. While US Admiral Leighton Smith, who heads the international peacekeeping troops, said that he supported Bildt's efforts against Karadzic, he insisted that the NATO-led force had no mandate to engage in a man-hunt for any war criminal.

SDS leaders are expected to announce in the coming days their candidates for the September elections — a key signal about the situation in the Serb entity of Bosnia. "Radovan Karadzic is losing his battle with the international community and will in time vanish from the political scene," said Carl Bildt.



Edited by Gamal Nkrumah



## Al-Ahram Weekly

### Blind leadership

At the joint press conference between Netanyahu and Clinton in Washington on Tuesday, the peace process suffered yet another major setback as the Israeli Prime Minister showed no signs of renouncing belligerence and intransigence in favour of compromise and cooperation. Compounding the matter, US President Bill Clinton appeared unwilling to jeopardise his reelection chances by urging Netanyahu to follow through on pledges made by the previous Israeli administration.

In diplomatic parlance, Netanyahu said, "Yes to a united Jerusalem, yes to secure peace on the Syrian front and yes to co-existence between us and the Palestinians." Decoded, this is tantamount to a resounding "No" to all the prerequisites for the successful continuation of the final status negotiations, the redeployment of forces from Hebron, restricting the building of settlements, easing the border closures and the land-for-peace deal. It is also the kiss of death for any dreams Netanyahu may have harboured about ensuring Israel's security.

The writing on the wall is easily read by Israel's left-wing opposition members in the Knesset, by the Arabs — even by the US. Netanyahu, however, still clings tenaciously to the misguided belief that security must come before peace. And this neither augurs well for peace nor for security.

Under Netanyahu's hard-line platform, for peace to be something more than a distant mirage, the PNA must disarm Hamas, detain any and all who are suspected of terrorist activities, accept the continued building of settlements in Gaza and the West Bank, renounce their dream of having East Jerusalem as the capital of a Palestinian state and even renounce the dream of having a state, altogether.

Nonetheless, Israel, he believes has already made ample concessions. "Does fairness require that Israel yield 100 per cent and the Arab side yield zero per cent," he queried. Ideally, the solution, in his eyes, would be that the figures be reversed, assuming there was any fundamental validity to his claim. Such foolhardy demands can only result in more unrest, the deconstruction of the peace process, a greater security risk for Israel and the region and more bloodshed.

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# Behind the euphemisms

The strategic balance of power in the Middle East is too delicate to take on board Israeli intransigence. How then to proceed? **Ibrahim Nafie** examines the possibilities



It appears that Israel's new Likud government is going to be more troublesome than we had anticipated though certain *de facto* realities may restrict how far it can pursue its provocative platform.

The Israeli government has already indicated that it might be willing to modify its stands on certain issues and that, in the long term, it will be more flexible and realistic. Nonetheless anxieties remain regarding the potential behavior of the Likud government. Significantly such anxieties, rather than diminishing, are growing worse, fed by the stream of hard-line statements and obvious machinations emanating from Tel Aviv. The situation is such that several states may well have to consider prospects that would not have occurred to them several months earlier.

At the beginning of this month *Ha'aretz* reported that Jordanian government officials had urged the new Israeli prime minister to be more low key about Jordanian-Israeli relations. Given the orientation of the Likud government Israel publicly could, it was feared, destabilise the position of the Jordanian regime at home and abroad. And only last week President Mubarak was asked by the editor-in-chief of *Le Figaro* whether there was any likelihood of another Arab-Israeli war in the near future and whether the Middle East might revert to "the dark days" of its history.

The underlying reasons for such apprehensions are obvious. The Likud has declared its unwillingness to adhere to the principles upon which the peace process was founded and has so far refused to abide by agreements already signed. In doing so the Likud has created a climate that has forced other parties in the peace process to once again examine scenarios they believed consigned to the past.

I remain hopeful that the situation will not deteriorate to the conditions

that prevailed before the 1991 Madrid conference, not least because the Arabs — convinced that peace is a strategic option — have evolved a new way of dealing with Israel's hawkish stand.

The strategic balance of power in the Middle East, broader in scope than the military balance of power, remains sufficiently delicate to make it impossible for any one party to interfere with the interests of another without incurring great costs. Such a position mitigates against the possibility of renewed conflict. Yet if the Likud government refuses to budge significantly from its hard-line policy, the peace process is likely to remain frozen.

Arab countries are not, after all, going to agree to negotiate over four years of negotiations. The effort involved in coaxing a recognition of the principle of land for peace, and the subsequent Jerusalem efforts that resulted in the arrival at written and tacit understandings based on principles contained within signed agreements are not going to be thrown away willingly. At this stage no Arab leader can seriously be expected to debate whether or not the Israeli prime minister will meet with the pres-

ident of the Palestinian National Authority. For the Arabs there can be no retreat down that road.

Should the Israeli government call for a resumption of negotiations without declaring its commitment to the principles upon which the peace process was founded, then the call will be futile. Netanyahu, in stating his willingness to resume negotiations "without pre-set conditions", seems intent on pursuing such a futile exercise, since the "no pre-set conditions" is in fact a euphemism for the principle of land for peace, the agreement to include the status of Jerusalem in the final phase of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations and attempts to secure parity in security arrangements along Israel's boundaries with Arab countries, notably Syria.

Should the Likud government press for renewed negotiations on the basis of its declared positions — administrative autonomy for the Palestinians without granting autonomy over the land, refusal to restore the Golan Heights to Syrian sovereignty — then neither the Palestinians nor the Syrians will have any incentive to return to the negotiating table. What would they have to

hope for? A new "agenda" for the Palestinians with no hope of territorial autonomy? A new concept of "peace" with no reference to the Golan Heights?

The ultimate aims of the Palestinian and Syrian negotiators are to reclaim their legitimate rights, and neither are prepared to jeopardise them.

If the Likud government refuses to change its line radically it is quite possible that, for all practical purposes the peace process will freeze entirely, a prospect that no Israeli government can seriously contemplate. There are forces within the Arab countries that restrict their governments' freedom to manoeuvre. They may not be political parties but they are influential forces nevertheless, capable of jeopardising the political stability of those governments perceived to have transgressed beyond certain bounds.

The Arabs will not be party to Israeli diplomatic and political subterfuge aimed at diverting the attention of the Arabs and the international community. Spurious reports that Egypt had obtained Saudi missile parts from North Korea or that Syria is sheltering terrorist elements, mobilising the pro-Israeli lobby

by in the US against Egyptian interests, subjecting the Palestinian Authority to such pressures as to erode it from within — these are the customary ruses and tactics of Israel, to which we must respond calmly. There can be no obfuscating the real issue between the Arabs and Israel, and these issues are governed by formal agreements, written commitments and set agendas. To be frank, Arab governments are fed up with finding themselves on the defensive in secondary, diversionary issues and equally fed up at being subjected to double standards while their interests and legitimate rights are ignored.

What will happen if Israeli intransigence brings about a freeze in the peace process? All answers point in the same direction, expressed by President Mubarak in his recent interview with *Le Figaro*. "The reaction," he said, "will be formidable."

Over the past few weeks I have heard speak of several disturbing scenarios. These include an increase in terrorist activities targeting all parties; an increase in armed violence across border regions between Israel and some Arab countries; wide-scale popular uprisings, aimed at all parties, within the Occupied Territories and their peripheries; growing tensions between the Arabs and Israel as a result of Israel's political and diplomatic subterfuge and aggravated international tensions over regional issues that the peace process was supposed to have addressed. All, or any, of the above would obviously drag Israel, the Arabs, and those powers with regional interests, into a hopeless situation.

The ball is in Israel's court. All the Israeli government has to do to reinvigorate the peace process is to abide by the commitments it has already made. Is that too onerous a task for the Israeli government? Not if it is sincere in its desire to live with its neighbours in accordance with the principles of a just and lasting peace.

### Probing the future [1]

## Egypt in the year 2020

A project to forecast what Egypt will look like in the year 2020 is now being developed by the Third World Forum. **Mohamed Sid-Ahmed** discusses methodological problems facing such a venture

If we could frame the right questions regarding the manner in which sets of variables are likely to unfold over a specific time-frame in future, would it be possible to foresee a specific future scenario? Would the difficulty lie only in accumulating the necessary data? This issue is of particular relevance for a project currently being developed by the Third World Forum under the sponsorship of Dr Ismail Sabry Abdallah, director of the Forum's Middle East branch. In an introductory note under the title "Egypt 2020", Dr Abdallah wrote: "I have not read one research paper or study carrying this title. Nor have I heard of any scientific institution, in Egypt or abroad, addressing this issue. In the early seventies, there was a great deal of talk about Egypt 2000, and many conferences were held under this slogan, but then interest in the whole idea waned."

The opening paper of the Third World Forum's project Egypt 2020 deals basically with problems of methodology, specifically, the problem of how to select the right questions to be asked. It does not attempt to find the answers to these questions based on facts specific to Egypt. The only answer the paper does come up with is that the optimum time-frame for forecasting is a quarter of a century, being neither too long for matters to become blurred, especially with the present accelerated pace of history, nor too short to reduce the project's scope to that of a planning project, which deals with a close future readily foreseeable from the vantage point of the present.

What is certain is that no society in our contemporary world can afford not to develop future studies. Those which neglect to do so will find themselves at a severe disadvantage vis-à-vis those which strive to envision the shape of things to come. 'Modelling' has become a sci-

ence, and probably also an art, that all developed societies practice. And because our contemporary world depends more and more on mammoth projects that necessarily take time to devise, build and set into motion, much of the future is already part and parcel of the present. That is not to say, however, that the future can be addressed as though it were the present. Any attempt to disregard the qualitative difference between the two comes up against many methodological and philosophical problems.

How can the relevant data concerning a specific enquiry into the future be seen as necessarily all-encompassing? "Historical determinism" can no longer be reduced to a "linear" reading of history, to vulgar over-simplifications that have greatly discredited the concept in recent years. It is now generally accepted that future events have to be assessed in terms of a probability approach, of conceiving individual future scenarios in statistical terms. To do otherwise is to imprison the future in the present instead of using the present as a springboard towards the future.

Future events cannot be assimilated to those that have happened in the past or are happening in the present. The future is an open frontier, an open system, and any attempt to predict future events betrays the assumption that they can be assimilated to events that have already happened. In fact, it is an attempt to 'close the system', i.e. to introduce elements of 'certainty' and 'inevitability' into it. But the real question we need to ask ourselves, philosophically and not only factually, is to what extent our ability to forecast can make out of discrete, quantifiable variables the building blocks of a comprehensive, qualitatively-determined, picture of the future?

Actually, all the data necessary to build a comprehensive image of the future can never be made available beforehand. Of course, certain

events can be predicted with absolute precision, such as when and where a meteor will strike planet Earth, or how the hole in the ozone layer will develop over a given span of time. But this ability to calculate given occurrences with great mathematical precision applies only to an extremely limited number of cases.

What is much easier, and much more common, is to establish certain 'preferred models' or, alternatively, one or more specific models seen as the most probable, or the easiest to determine and foresee. It can also be said that a given sequence of events will necessarily bring about a given outcome. For instance, non-democratic behaviour by a state will necessarily bring about social violence. But the outcome, if predictable in logical terms, is not necessarily so in chronological terms. A calendar, with specific dates, is very difficult to forecast in such cases.

Still, it is legitimate to say that, at each given moment, one specific model could be developed and regarded as the standard model. Eventually, as time passes and initial assumptions are proved to be either right or wrong, chances to correct, or improve on, the standard model will emerge. For even as the standard model is adopted, alternative models will be developed and, at any given time, the standard model could be replaced by one of these alternative models.

So modelling is never definitive. It cannot be said that a final model for the future is firmly established at a given time. Actually, modelling is a perpetual process, a sort of preconceived, or alternative, scenario for the future, a frame of reference for self-examination, self-criticism and perpetual reassessment of the optimum path a society should follow. There is no such thing as definitely 'closing' the future.

### City of memory

By Naguib Mahfouz

I received the news that UNESCO had selected Cairo as a regional cultural capital for 1997 with great pleasure. Not, of course, that there is anything new in the accolade. Cairo has, after all, been a capital of culture for centuries. After Damascus and Baghdad fell into decline their mantle passed to Cairo, and the city became a refuge for Arab writers and intellectuals.

Besides being a melting pot for many different cultures — Pharaonic, Graeco-Roman, Persian, Coptic, Islamic — its location at the crossroads of three continents has made it a catalyst for cultural interchange.

We must hope that the choice of Cairo as a cultural capital will reinforce artistic and cultural life not only in the city but in the region as a whole. The choice should serve to remind the whole world of the distinguished cultural pedigree that is the Arab's birthright.

Such a reminder is of particular significance at a time when so many voices amongst us sing to reactionary times, raised in a call to lure us back to those days, almost two centuries ago, before Egypt had emerged as a modern nation-state.

These siren calls are now making themselves felt in the field of culture. The choice of Cairo as a cultural centre could not, then, have come at a better time, since it can only aid us in our attempts to resist these voices.

So, indeed, the city UNESCO has chosen is less a commercial centre, less an industrial complex, but rather a city of cultures, or more precisely, a city steeped in cultural memories.

Based on an interview by Mohamed Salama.

### The Press This Week

### Survival of the strongest

**Al-Ahram:** "Despite the fact that Israel is stronger militarily than all the Arabs put together and has a nuclear capability which the Arabs do not have, it continues to picture itself as a meek little pigeon threatened by bloodthirsty Arab dinosaurs which are forever trying to gobble it up. Although this scenario is not on the cards and was never contemplated in the first place, it is still propagated to the unaware in the West." (Ahmed Bahgat, 8 July)

**Al-Akhbar:** "This is not to defend UN Secretary-General Boutros Ghali or to express a bias for him as an Egyptian... what really alarms me is the US' hostility towards him out of a sense that all international organisations must bow to its will and their activities must serve its interests and those of its protégé Israel." (Galal Dawidar, 7 July)

**Al-Ahram:** "The US is not a friend or a partner. It has always been the supreme conspirator... the Arabs are not confronting Israel by itself but the US as well. It was the US which created Israel — a racist, extremist entity bursting with weapons of mass destruction — the instruments of blackmail and terror. If this is the situation, the Arabs should not be deceived by American claims that the US is a partner and a friend, brokering the settlement of the long-standing Arab-Israeli conflict. The Americans do not respect a friend nor a pledge even if the Arabs show friendliness, goodwill or total submission." (Mohamed Asfour, 6 July)

**October:** "The vicious campaign conducted by the Israeli government and media against Egypt and Amr Moussa in particular, confirms that we are on the right track. If the opposite had happened I would have said that something was wrong." (Mohsen Hassanein, 7 July)

**Al-Akhbar:** "The US should realise that to support the intransigent stances of Netanyahu's government simply means confronting the whole world which aspires to bring peace back onto the correct path. So is the US really willing to confront the world for the sake of Mr Netanyahu?" (Editorial, 8 July)

**Al-Shaab:** "It is wrong to think that Netanyahu's lifespan is short. He does not represent only himself; he represents all Zionists. It does not matter who is doing the job — it could be Netanyahu or anybody else. For every age, there is a man of consequence." (9 July)

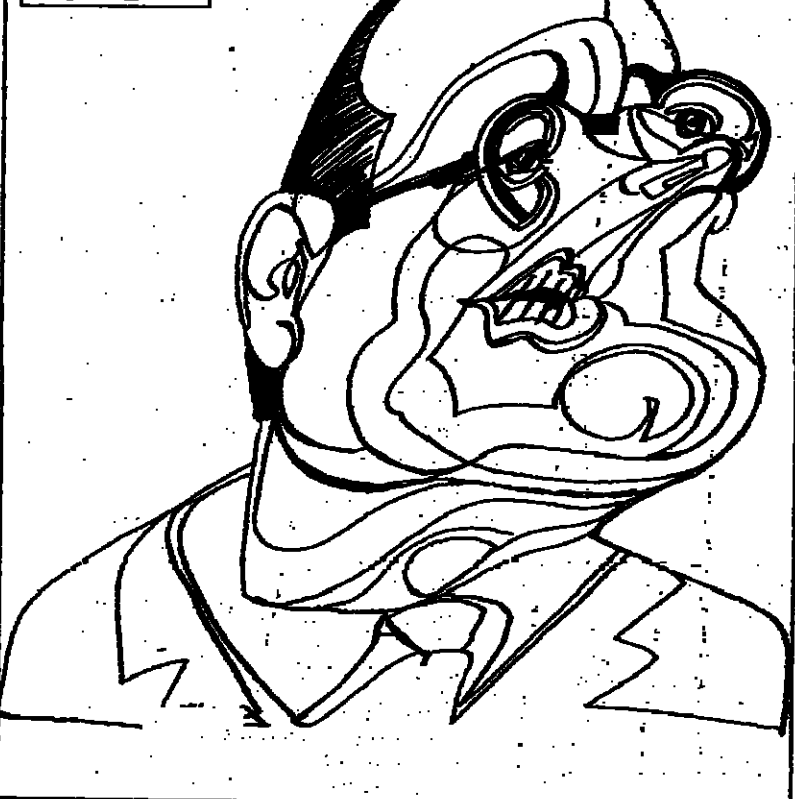
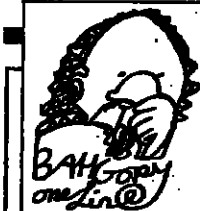
**Al-Wafd:** "The attack on the editor-in-chief of *Al-Shaab* newspaper is a crime which we hope all agencies will condemn. An attack on a writer is an attack on the freedom of expression and a humiliation of journalists everywhere. No matter what differences there are with the editor of *Al-Shaab*, these must remain confined to differences of opinion and must only be resolved through dialogue." (Editorial, 5 July)

**Al-Arabi:** "It cannot be that words are the weapon of the press and guns the weapon of the rest. One side believes in dialogue while the other believes in force — a dangerous phenomenon, of which the violent attacks against [opposition] chief editors provides ample evidence... It is not a question of aggression against an individual, but one against the heritage of the nation and its future. When it becomes a question of survival of the strongest, therein lies the catastrophe. Freedom of expression and the rule of law are the safety valves for all; the society, the government and the press." (Mahmoud El-Maraghi, 8 July)

**Al-Ahram:** "The beating of the editor-in-chief of *Al-Shaab* is not the first of its kind... The danger is that this should become a permitted *modus operandi* in dealing with opposition writers — whatever the differences might be... At the end of the day we do not want Egypt to become a breeding ground for hidden terrorism — we do not want it [Egypt] to become another Algeria." (Salama Ahmed Salama, 6 July)

**Rose El-Youssef:** "I challenge those gangs of thugs [who beat the chief editor of *Al-Shaab*] to try and get me. Nobody will stop me from saying the truth. I bet none of them can stand in my way, for one simple reason; I am out of the country, on a long holiday — until further notice." (Assem Hanafi, 8 July)

Compiled by Hala Saqr



French cartoonists tend to make of Chirac's head a square, with a sharp, rapier-like nose raised in challenge to opponents. I see their point, but wanted to depart at least a little from such depictions. Chirac walks as if he is sitting on a horse, a peculiar gait that I myself have observed on several occasions. In puppet shows, in France, he is usually shown as a ram. These are both aspects that I have attempted to encapsulate in my own, admittedly idiosyncratic cartoon of the French president.



## Close up

Salama A. Salama

### Hitting below the belt

There has been a marked escalation, during the last few days, in Washington's campaign to prevent Boutros Boutros Ghali from gaining a second term as secretary-general. It is a campaign that is no longer limited to articles in the American press suggesting that, though Ghali did a reasonable job the UN now needs an injection of new blood, and new managerial skills, necessitating the election of a new secretary-general capable of shouldering the heavy burdens that have come in the post-Cold War era. Now the Americans have upped the ante, orchestrating an unprecedented chorus aimed at destabilising the secretary-general's position to such an extent that it will be difficult for him to fulfil his obligations for the rest of his current term.

Nowhere has the escalation of the campaign been more clear than in two recent incidents. The first occurred when the American administration upstaged the secretary-general and went public over the food for oil deal before Boutros Ghali had had time to announce the details of the arrangements. Washington, via Madeleine Albright, its UN representative, pre-empted the secretary-general when she announced that the UN had reservations about the manner in which the deal was to be implemented. It is customary for the secretary-general to recommend to the Security Council, for approval or rejection, any such arrangements, though in this instance the US representative pre-empted the possibility of this happening.

The second incident, another hit below the belt by the Americans, concerns the statement made by George Moose, under-secretary of state, for African Affairs, during the Yaounde African summit. Moose told the summit that the US would be willing to support African candidates other than Boutros Ghali, in the hope of dividing African nations, the largest continental group in the UN, and promoting the kind of rivalries that may well result in there being no successful African candidate after all.

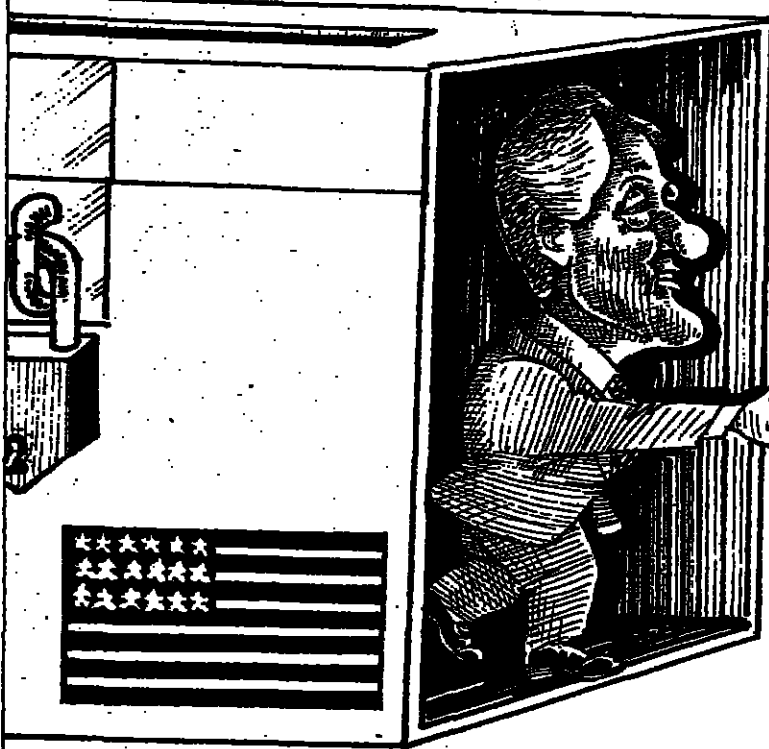
The manner in which the US seeks to impose its will over the UN — and, for that matter, the world in general — is bound to elicit an angry response from Egypt, Arab and African countries, and the Third World. Such a reaction is merely compounded by the fact that the reasons given by Washington are unconvincing and naive fabrications.

Much has been written in defence of Boutros Ghali and his record as secretary-general; many attempts have been made to expose the real motives behind the biased American stand over his re-nomination. Yet despite all that has been said, Washington will continue its diplomatic plotting, continue to twist arms behind closed doors. For Washington, in reality, is concerned with neither the age nor the competence of the present secretary-general. What really concerns the US administration is its attempt to prepare the ground for major changes in the international organisation's mandate, changes that will accord with Washington's perception of its own hegemonic role in the new world order.

American desires to reduce the role of the UN in resolving international and regional conflicts have become increasingly apparent. The US is seeking to restrict the UN's areas of competence to social and human issues, thus undermining the voting weight of the hundreds of small, poor and developing countries that comprise the majority of UN members. America is seeking to turn the UN into a multi-story edifice, the deluxe penthouses reserved for the few whose rights will be acknowledged, while the majority will see their rights eroded. Certainly, to effect this transformation, a secretary-general of the calibre of Boutros Ghali is unnecessary. Rather, what is needed is a functionary with executive powers.

The attempt to depose Boutros Ghali, then, is but one step in achieving American ends. And it is necessary that the international community wakes to the grave consequences that will affect the whole world if the American plans succeed.

Gomaa



# Total acceptance equals total rejection

To assume that the differences between Netanyahu and Peres are more than a result of window dressing is a redundant exercise, argues Edward Said

It is an irony of recent Arab political analysis that we went suddenly from a style of considering everything about Israel as being always the same to one in which we saw differences everywhere inside Israel, differences that were total. Just 20 years ago, for example, Zionism was considered as colouring all Israeli political parties, personalities, discussions and actions. Everyone was a Zionist enemy, from the bus driver to the army chief-of-staff. A few intellectual attempts were made here and there to moderate this quite rigid picture, but until Anwar Sadat went to Jerusalem in 1977 the unanimity and uniformity of Arab views of Israel were nearly complete.

After Camp David, a greater sophistication set in, but certainly after the Gulf War and the Madrid conference, Israel became a subject for all kinds of Arab experts to pronounce on. I recall that in June 1992 I was in Amman, having just arrived there from the Occupied Territories; it was my first visit to Palestine since my family and I left in late 1947. By coincidence Yasser Arafat was in Amman, convalescing from a recent operation in one of the royal palaces. So my family and I paid him a social visit on the very day of the Israeli elections that brought Yitzhak Rabin's Labour Party to power. What struck me at the time was how Arafat and about 15 of his closest advisers were watching the results on television with extraordinary precision and discrimination; they seemed to have precise knowledge of each parliamentary district and its candidates, something that would have been impossible five years before.

Of course the change from rigidity and blindness to analysis and considered reflection is a good one. But that is not what I am talking about. The worrisome factor is when in becoming more sophisticated you begin to believe that differences between Labour and Likud, for instance, are absolute instead of relative, and you begin to forget or overlook the abiding continuities within Israeli, or for that matter, all national politics. Now that the Israeli elections are over, it is perhaps useful to confirm that there are important differences between Peres and Netanyahu. The former is a European-style politician, raised in an international atmosphere of socialist politics, on which the first generation of Israeli politicians — like Ben-Gurion, who was Peres' mentor — thrived. Netanyahu is an American-style technician, a manager as well as an ideological soldier whose ideas about Israel and the world are extremely simple, even crude.

He represents a reaction against the inbred, clubby world that produced Peres, and therefore thrives on the notion that he is a brash outsider. I vividly recall my impression of him when he was UN representative in New York, and we would occasionally appear together on TV programmes. First of all he always categorically refused to be in the same room with me, requiring a separate studio for himself, even though we were debating each other. Once on Ted Koppel's Nightline, a widely watched late-night programme, Koppel himself felt called upon to explain that Netanyahu had specified the extremely bizarre arrangements otherwise he would not appear with me. I used the oddness of the man's behaviour to make a comment on Zionist ideology as being premised on the absence, if not total effacement, of the Palestinian.

Second, it was impossible to engage Netanyahu in any kind of discussion. This was during the Intifada, when issues like human rights, resistance, and the struggle for justice were our watchwords. Netanyahu always resorted to the numbing repetition of a few phrases about Israeli security, the need to resist terrorism, and, over and over again, the importance of defeating terrorism. He gave me the impression of addressing everyone and no-one at the same time. I never had the sense of him as anything but a programmed voice in a suit, unwilling to open out one inch beyond his extremely circumscribed ideological vision. He was glib, never at a loss of words, and utterly committed to what he said.

The last time I saw him was in April 1988; I was sitting in my airline seat bound for Europe when he rushed on board and was shown to the seat in front of me. At first he did not see me, and spent the first hour of our flight nervously leafing through old issues of Time and Newsweek. When he came back to his seat after going to the bathroom he saw me sitting just behind him, and his face froze. He immediately called the attendant and asked to be transferred to another seat, which of course he promptly was. A senior UN official who happened to be on the plane came up to me after witnessing the odd incident. "Mr Ambassador don't be frightened of you," he said with a chuckle. I never saw Netanyahu after he moved seats, not even when we arrived at our destination. In a similar situation, I suppose, Peres might have engaged in polite conversation.

Those are the differences: background, generation, style. Yet both are bound to each other in the most important ways. Neither man would seriously entertain the possibility of conceding sovereignty to Palestinians, even though Peres is a master at using the language of conciliation and "peace" to seduce Westerners and Arab leaders and experts into believing that he really meant what the world wanted him to mean. Both men are radically committed to the superiority of Israeli Jews over Palestinian Arabs, or all Arabs for that matter. Both men are unshakably convinced that for Israel to survive as it has survived it must have, and be willing to use, devastating power over the Arabs. Whatever mode of co-existence would be settled on, for both Peres and Netanyahu the Arabs would be required to satisfy Israeli demands in political, economic and military terms.

Peres seemed to make concessions, but if one looks back at his record the pattern is quite clear. He took advantage of Arab disunity and Palestinian gullibility to open up Asian and African (and of course Arab) markets to Israeli economic advantage; he and Rabin manipulated the US and the peace process so as to keep Israel in a position of superiority whereby it dictated the terms, the agenda and every possible outcome; and all this without giving up a single strategic objective. He bombed Lebanon without real restraint; he gave up nothing — except a few verbal hints — to Syria; in Gaza and the West Bank he continued land expropriations, increased the settler population, closed off area A from areas B and C, strangled the economy, imposed horrendous security conditions on Yasser Arafat, turning the autonomous areas into areas of oppression that were subject not to the norms of civilized life but to the harsh imperatives, both real and imagined, of security for every Israeli man, woman and child.

Neither Peres nor Netanyahu cares in the final analysis what Israel's actions have cost the Palestinians as a people. The difference is that Peres wants moral approval from Arabs and others, whereas Netanyahu is not interested in what anyone else thinks. Peres went out of his way to gain for Israel a retrospective forgiveness of any responsibility incurred towards Palestinians during the many years of occupation; in addition he wanted to continue the occupation indirectly, so that Israeli soldiers and settlers would not have to be seen. Netanyahu wants to rule directly, he wants everyone actually to see Israeli settlers and soldiers invading and occupying Palestinian areas. It is an interesting fact (unmentioned to my knowledge in any Arab or Western press report) that Netanyahu, one of the leading settler weeklies, admitted one week before the elections that Peres and the Labour Party had done more for the settlements than the Likud.

Despite these facts the leadership of the Arab world expresses regret and consternation at Netanyahu's victory. What we have been unable to see clearly in our search for change and difference in Israeli politics is that the basic core of Israeli attitudes to the Arabs generally, and the Palestinians in particular, has not really been modified enough. We have accommodated to that core, we have changed, we have accepted it as a fact of nature, and as a result we have grasped at the cosmetic differences that a clever tactician like Peres has exploited. So long as the core is protected by Israeli power, and so long as there is no sustained, systematic Arab attempt to force the change, we shall remain as supplicants or as dependents.

There is a tragic parallel to the Palestinian situation in what has taken place between whites and blacks in American society over the past century. The recent outbreak of black church fires in a few Southern states (for which the word "terrorism" does not seem to be used) demonstrates that a vast gulf of resentment and racial prejudice still permits the white majority to treat blacks as a permanent under-class who can be kept in a state of permanent backwardness and oppression: it is this gulf of racial discrimination that produces the church burning and the perpetuation of the black race on a systematic basis. Whites are too powerful, the blacks too weak to make the change. By the same token Israelis can exist inside Israel, drive their cars, water their lawns, fill their pools, go to their schools and universities without having in any way to think of Palestinians except as a nuisance occasionally to be tolerated. Arabs can do the manual labour, they can serve as waiters, they can exist in their autonomous zones, but that is all. They do not in any serious way impinge on the consciousness or sense of identity of the average Israeli, any more than a middle-class white professional in America needs to spend too much time thinking about the tragedy and the waste that define African American life. There has been no integration to speak of, neither in Israel nor in the US. In this respect the Labour Party and the Likud are more or less the same.

We cannot say a great deal that is better about our own societies, which remain extremely closed in on themselves. Take as an example the large number of non-Westerners that live and function today inside Eu-

## Soapbox

### The voice of sanity

Peres lost the Israeli elections in spite of unprecedented levels of external support. Netanyahu achieved victory by making impossible promises to an electorate split between those who want a civil, secular society and those who desire an extremist, religious state. And against the backdrop of a fragmented Israeli society Netanyahu is attempting to turn the office of prime minister into a kind of White House presidency.

Regional analysts may well have good reason to assume that the world is going mad. It is an impression that can only have been reinforced by the recent bombings in Bahrain and the explosion targeting American servicemen in Saudi Arabia.

Some forces, it seems, appear determined to return the region back to the mid-'50s, dividing it into spheres of influence by establishing alliances and military agreements. The Arabs, however, have set themselves against such recidivist logic, and wholeheartedly reject moves such as the recent Turkish-Israeli military agreement. Such arrangements, unsurprisingly, are viewed as furthering the interests of a few individual states at the expense of the majority.

Yet amidst all the madness that appears to have descended on the region the Arabs have shown themselves capable of organising a successful Arab summit. That summit plotted the pathway future negotiations should follow, insisting that commitments already undertaken by Israel should be fulfilled, and that the peace process should continue within the framework of the land-for-peace formula, as was agreed at Madrid.

In providing a breath of sanity, the Cairo Arab Summit paved the way for the continuation of negotiations, and no doubt dealt a blow to all those who had hoped to benefit from the atmosphere of madness that appeared to prevail.

This week's Soapbox speaker is the permanent representative of Palestine at the Arab League.



Mohamed Sobeh

## To The Editor

### Niqab not anorexia

Sir - A wise teacher once told me: "Worship of your culture sets people apart. Worship of your creator draws the believing hearts closer to the truth."

After recognising the oneness of my creator and his creation I, as a historian, was curious to seek out the similarities and differences regarding my former beliefs and practices and those found in the Qur'an.

My good conscience impels me now to recommend a study of the Bible as we ponder the question of head covering for women. We find the subject mentioned in I Corinthians 11 - 5th. Although biblical revision is an established fact we cannot ignore the text entirely.

So much for dismissing long prevailing modes of women's fashion as having no religious basis. However, I do thank Djamae Kamil for her incorrect analysis (Letters to the editor, Al-Ahram Weekly 21-26 June) as she compelled me to provide a more accurate response which hopefully will enable the readers to gain further insight into themselves and the ways of their ancestors.

Blind imitation without reflection does indeed set all of us, not only women, apart. Yet no one can deny the flagrant wide spread abuse of women in all forms of media. Not to mention the

prevalence of anorexia and bulimia as young girls attempt to identify with distorted ideas of femininity. Perhaps a general acceptance of the concept of covering could alleviate some of the cause of so much pain?

Finally, rather than attack what you don't know, be it myself as dangerous, misleading and intolerant or my scholarship as inaccurate, please research further and join in the new discourse which I frequently advise and welcome. I prefer to provide evidence for niqab from the Qur'an and Hadith Sahih in an upcoming letter giving the subject its deserved space, as it seems to be causing a great deal of disturbance among certain advocates of "tolerance".  
Umm Salaha  
Digla, Masadi

### Not to win or lose

Sir - I'd like to express my deep appreciation for the decision taken by the head of the Higher Council for Youth and Sports, Abdel-Moemin Emara. He dismissed the Zamalek Board of Directors and disbanded the Egyptian Football Federation in an attempt to rescue the Egyptian game from disgrace.

Although it stirred a great dispute among sportsmen and critics and about 2,500 of Zamalek members launched a protest cam-

paign, the decision was the appropriate reaction to the irresponsible and shameful behaviour of Zamalek players and their board.

The new federation's order suspending Khaled El-Ghandour is a very wise and just action. It is a punitive measure which aims at correcting mistakes and restoring order and stability to our playgrounds. It deters the slander and sedition mongers.

Comparing Euro '96 and our local league championship, one finds a bitter and shameful image on the ethical level. I think Emara's decision reveals a very important message namely, ethics is the essence of sports. Thus our players must learn this and apply it.

I hope that the new federation formulates a new strategy which avoids the apathetic and negative features of its predecessor and manages to contain the crisis which spoils the sportive atmosphere and ended the soccer season tragically.  
Ahmed Mohamed Sabry  
Post-graduate Studies  
Cairo University

### Techno challenges

Sir - Cairo's new Technological Development Centre (TDC), inaugurated by Mrs Suzanne Mubarak and established as part of the national educational plan initiated in 1992 by President Hosni Mubarak, is a positive step for Egypt's modern educational renaissance.

TDC will certainly help upcoming generations meet the challenges of the 21st century and communicate with the rapid international development of educational technology.

We need the minister of education to establish such centres in other governorates for supervising schools, institutes and universities.  
Shazly Asmail Bahr  
Aswan

### Breath of fresh air

Sir - With the dog-days of summer upon us, I wonder if your readers are suffering unduly from the long, hot days. If so, may I recommend a few alternative remedies.

Take up Nile River fishing as a hobby and enjoy the cool breezes that emanate from the water's surface.

Spend the day at the seaside somewhere along the Mediterranean coast.

Sit in a roadside cafe and pay the owner a nominal sum to water you regularly with his trusty hose.

Use the Scheherzade Hotel pool — if you like the feel of a British holiday resort in its post-season blues period.

Roll up your trouser legs and pad about in the fountains outside the World Trade Centre.

Sleep on the rooftop or a balcony of your apartment building after a generous application of mosquito repellent.

Make regular trips up the Cairo Tower to enjoy the refreshing winds that surge from the Western Desert.

Watch schmaltzy American-made films in the ice-cold air conditioning of some of the nation's more up-market cinema houses.  
Sophia Papadopolous  
Abasyia  
Cairo

### A voice of reason

Sir - I found the article about the Americans trying to bungle up Boutros Ghali's candidacy for a second term as United Nations secretary-general to be very interesting.

Al-Ahram Weekly was, to my knowledge, the very first paper to reveal the American plot to push for an African candidate and divide the ranks of the Africans.

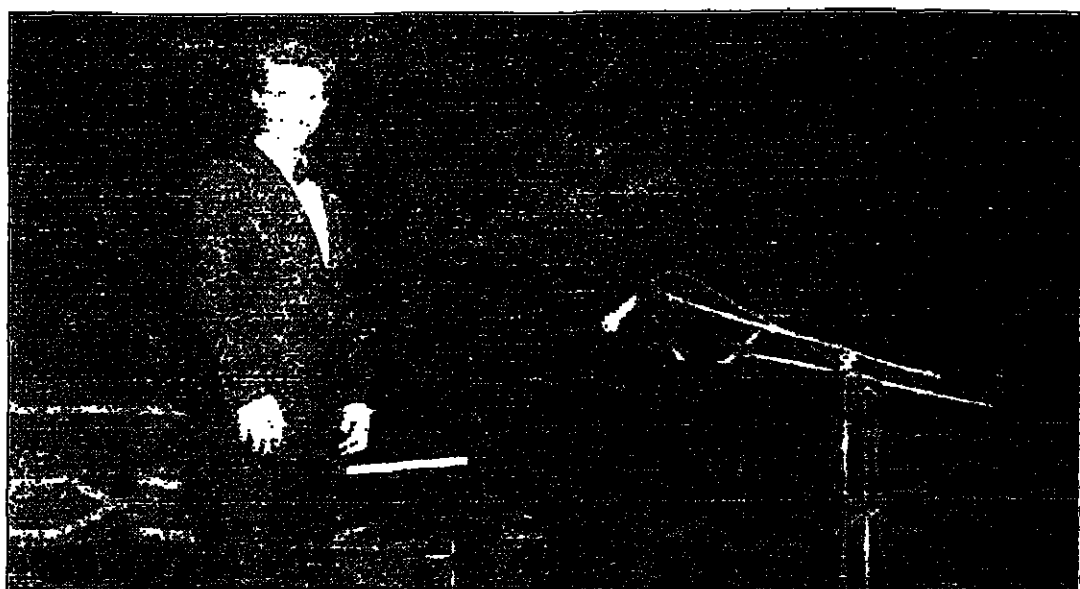
It is the same old imperialist tactic of divide and rule. Naturally the coverage of the issue in other international papers is from a Western perspective.

Thank God that we have in the Weekly an alternative viewpoint, one that is untainted by Western assumptions and is free of America's dictates. Your revelation was yet another Weekly scoop.

Keep up the good work.  
Wagih El-Wardani  
Shabra, Cairo.



# A fine romance



With no holds barred? None, writes David Blake

Samir Bayoumi Mansour, piano: American University in Cairo, Ewart Hall, 1 July

The poster hanging in the left hand corner of the window of the downtown gallery Cairo Berlin announced simply, in elegant black and white, with no portrait beyond a handsome concert grand piano, that Samir Bayoumi Mansour would perform. Off then to the Ewart Hall, to join a big, mostly young audience, and an atmosphere full of pre-performance hassle and tension.

The focus of all this? The first public performance of a 20-year-old player, the last in a line of talented students trained by Professor Vsevolod Demidov. Demidov, has for years been the Moscow Conservatoire's man in Cairo.

Demidov's concerts always have the authentic atmosphere associated with big musical centres. The professor himself, very withdrawn, was here to support his pupil. Mansour began the evening with two sonatas of Scarlatti, no 13 in D minor and no 1 in E major, both famous opening pieces in concerts of this type. Then came the Beethoven C minor — the *Moonlight*. Again a piece of well-worked ground. These opening shots were completed with nothing out of the ordinary. Who, one asked, is this player of middling ability? And why this big solo set up for something very

run of the mill?

Then came Liszt — *The Hungarian Rhapsody* in D major. Another well-worn piece. The player negotiated the rather tricky opening chords, and then it happened. He made a bad mistake. He stopped. He froze. It was a tear in the music. The audience caught on. They were silent, waiting. This moment of tension was prolonged. It was one of those moments that continue for ever, ripped out of time. The Lisztian image and visual aspect had flown. Still Mansour sat. Would he get up and go? After a kind of catatonic summoning of forces he poised himself and began again. And so the entire concert took off, leaving the ground behind. Out of evil — for musicians it is evil to simply stop — had come good. This stopping — famous singers do it, often driving big conductors insane.

Mansour is a young player, and he began like many pianists playing with his mother. After a game of musical chairs he ended, three years ago, with Demidov. Mansour has been around, attending international master-classes, but this concert was his first solo recital. Two days after his performance Demidov left for Russia leaving his pupils, including Mansour, on the brink.

Such a rift in the life of young players can cause troubles. Demidov is, after all, no ordinary professor. Indeed, he is,

in some ways, no professor at all. Like the great Leschetzki, he never called himself doctor, professor, master, beginner or finisher at all. He was plain Mr. the Russian who assisted. In his last period here there has been Iman Amin, Dina El-Leithy, Wael Farouq, Iman Noureddin, Mahmoud Mekeimar and Sameh El-Mahmoudi. This is not to say that Demidov has been Cairo's only piano teacher, just that his students have made the greatest impression.

After the black hole of the Liszt beginning he brought the piece to a grandiloquent finish. This pianist has great breadth of presentation, strong hands and a strange, quirky outlook on the music he performs. He gives no impression of aiming to be a great classical interpreter, a builder of huge fabrics to impress and fill out the already overstuffed classical wardrobe. He played from the cuff, was always luminous, pianistic and full of whims. Something fresh and new, sprucing up the well worn classical repertoire. And god help the classics unless pianists like Mansour get their chance. The alternative is to sit with the bangers and crashers, listening to a ballad-up tennis match of hard hitting. The fingers of the pianist must go out and feel the life around them, not be glued to keys, giving out the stale aroma of years of past performances.

Demidov's Cairo pupils have been

handed a thread. Time will show what they make of it. What Mansour's manner made of the rest of his concert was astounding. The Chopin Scherzo, op 39 in C minor, and the Etude, op 29, also C minor, were done with immaculate technique. In both these pieces, and the Prokofiev sonata, op 29, Mansour became that rarest of things, a genuine Romantic. He had made an audacious U-turn, never playing a scale phrase.

The joy of release, from the boredom of all those notes again, in the same run ups, the threadbare shows of grandeur when there are no octaves with which to astonish, with every difficulty made prominent. So play the good boys of the piano — but where is the music? Well, tonight it was at the AUC. Mansour did not sit at the piano crowded, ready for action. He sat, instead, as though he loved the instrument, and the musical form was one of instant feeling rather than long studied, intellectual grasp. He was in the land of Landowska, and that is some place to be for any pianist. Romanticism can never be cornered. It thrives on *sturm und drang* — what is a slip in the beginning when the end makes you glad to be alive.

So here is Mansour, at the beginning. What will come later, when he is exposed to the manifold mix up of the musical world will be eagerly waited for by those who witnessed the start.

Art

## Images of whose Africa?

Salah Hassan reviews a series of exhibitions, part of the Images of Africa festival held in Copenhagen, that purport to portray the continent

The list of exhibitions included in Images of Africa may, in essence, reflect the diversity, multiplicity, and complex terrain, and, in some instances, the global dimension of Africa's creative expressions. Yet the list may also run the risk of reinforcing the stereotypical representation of African art in international art fairs. And while it is true that most of these exhibitions are travelling ones that originated somewhere else, one must recognise that Images of Africa has provided the forum as well as the rationale to bring them together.

*Sign, Traces and Calligraphy* is among the few exhibitions which has escaped the entrapment of stereotypical representation. For once, works of North African artists are accepted as an integral part of African artistic expressions. A marvellous and dazzling show, *Sign, Traces and Calligraphy* brings together a group of highly skilled painters and master calligraphers whose works take the aesthetic potential of the Arabic letters' forms as a starting point of a complex voyage of artistic explorations. As eclectic as they may seem, the exhibited works merge innovative techniques, material, and content with new and challenging processes and forms. The exhibited works reflect interest in issues of colour, light, texture and experimentation with a range of materials as new forms of expressions. Their works certainly reflect a mastery of medium and a depth of knowledge of material used. In that respect, these works may in many instances fail either the ethnic or the authenticity test endemic to Western criteria of acceptance of African representation.

*The Art of Textiles* is another exhibition that deserves critical praise for its breadth of representation, and for its openness to new materials, images, uses and technologies, and inclusion of new traditions rarely seen in presentations of African textiles. One may also add to this list some of the photographic exhibitions which have featured the works of highly trained African photographers who betray the European gaze and

in some instances intend to subvert it. Another plus to *Images of Africa* is *Faces of the Gods*, an excellent show that foregrounds the global dimensions of Africa, a reality close to home but often forgotten. It reaffirms the interrelatedness and continuities of African people in the continent and the diaspora, especially in the creative arts. An indisputable reality, in spite of the violent and forced nature of the diaspora which disrupted cultures rich in the arts, social and political formations. While affirming the trans-Atlantic connection, the exhibition also shows how the presence and influence of African creative forms in the cultures of the diaspora have been shaped and recreated by the new experience. Above all, it proves Africans as the pioneers of conceptual art and the genre of installations which are now in vogue and definitive to post-modernist practices in Western art.

However, the majority of the exhibitions have failed to escape the entrapment of the Westerner's gaze and demand for difference and exoticism. *Towards the Year 2000* is a case in point and a model of recent European curatorial practices driven by an alliance of mostly white French curators: collectors who specialise in marketing art of a group of untrained Francophone African artists. Their taste and attitudes toward contemporary Africa, marked by a preference for the exotic, the naive, the unusual and the crude in African art, have resulted in the creation of a 'new primitivism' in African art. Such is the binding logic of bringing



together the group of artists in *Towards the Year 2000*, from Twin Seven Seven and Cheri Samba to Adeagbo, common features in the menu of 'new primitives' served in recent European feasts of contemporary art, without exception all are known to be self-taught, untrained in a fine art college or a university. Some collectors, such as Andre Magnin, are outspoken of their distaste of the art of college educated African artists. For Magnin and similar minded collectors, while art of the untrained is considered possessive of originality and an untrained African beauty. The exhibitions on Makonde art and the so-called Shona sculpture, which falls under

involvement of Africans as equal partners in similar project would be the first step towards breaking the Western monopoly and hegemony over the representation of African cultural production. In that sense, the so-called 'other' would be offered a true participation and voice in shaping the representation of his own culture and art, and hence the identity of international discourse. In such a discourse, differences can be articulated in such a way that the value of all cultures can be recognised as integral to the framing of our vast cultural experiences. At the end, broadening the boundaries offers an opportunity for all

temporary cultures to engage in a meaningful discourse. If the exhibitions of Images of Africa signal anything, despite their nonexceptional failings, it is that African culture, like any other culture, is ever-changing and that the changes which have occurred and are occurring within African representation are no less or more unique than elsewhere. The real virtue of Images of Africa may eventually lie in the dialogue the festival as a whole might generate about contemporary African arts and culture. After all, we are not talking about a forum of plastic arts only, but a festival of contemporary African music, theatre, and dance which in the end will inevitably offer a window into the richness, diversity and complexity of modern Africa's creative expressions.

### EXHIBITIONS

**Amin El-Serifi (Paintings)**  
Mansour Abul Kalam Azad Centre for Indian Culture, 23 Talat Harb St. Downtown. Tel 393 3396. 11 July, 11am-6.30pm.

**Georges Selim (Paintings)**  
Gallery Salama, 36A Ahmed Orabi St. Mohammediat. Tel 346 3242. Daily, except Fri. 10am-2.30pm & 5.30pm-9.30pm. Until 23 July.

**Mohamed Shaker (Paintings) & Tarek Zahedy (Sculptures)**  
Extra Gallery, 3 El-Nessim St. Zamilak. Tel 340 6293. Daily, except Sat. 10.30am-2pm & 5pm-8pm. Until 27 July.

**Group Show (Paintings & Sculptures)**  
Espence Gallery, 1 El-Sherif St. Downtown. Tel 393 1699. Daily, except Fri & Sat. 9am-1pm. Until 5 August.

**Hellenic Library Foundation for Hellenic Culture**  
6 Aisha El-Taymouriya St. Garden City. Tel 355 1871. Daily, except Sat & Sun. 10am-2pm.

**The Museum of Mr and Mrs Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil**  
A display of books about Greece in Greek, English, French and Arabic. Tel 330 3376. Daily, except Mon. 10am-6pm.

**Egyptian Museum**  
Tahrir St. Downtown. Tel 375 4319. Daily, except Fri. 9am-3pm; Fri 9am-11.5am & 1pm-3pm.

**Coptic Museum**  
Mar Girgis, Old Cairo. Tel 362 3766. Daily, except Fri. 9am-4pm; Fri 9am-11.5am & 1pm-3pm.

**Islamic Museum**  
Port Said St. Ahmed Maher St. Bah El-Khalq. Tel 390 0930/390 1520. Daily, except Fri. 9am-4pm; Fri 9am-11.30am & 2pm-4pm.

**Museum of Modern Egyptian Art**  
Opera House Grounds, Giza. Tel 340 6841. Daily, except Mon. 10am-1pm & 5pm-9pm.

**Mohamed Nagel Museum**  
Chateau Pyramids, 1000m from the Pyramids, El-Giza. A museum devoted to the paintings of Mohamed Nagel (1888-1956).

**Mahmoud Makhar Museum**  
Tahrir St. Giza. Tel 340 6841. Daily, except Mon. 10am-1pm & 5pm-9pm.

**Indian Films**  
Mansour Abul Kalam Azad Centre for Indian Culture, 23 Talat Harb St. Downtown. Tel 393 3396.

**Disco Dancer 11 July, 4pm**  
Bloody Vengeance 15 July, 4pm. Both films star Mihun Shakarbari.

**University Laws**  
Japanese Cultural Centre, 106 Qasr El-Aini St. Garden City. 11 July, 4pm.

**Directed by Kazuyuki Izutsu (1990)**  
A family in a small town has a textile mill. Yoshiaki, one of the sons, leaves the town after conflicts with his father and becomes a fashion designer. He returns home after the father's death, yet he still faces problems.

**Robert De Niro, a highly professional gangster, and Al Pacino, the cop in charge of arresting him, meet face to face in a powerful confrontation during which their talent reaches its peak. Directed by Michael Mann.**

**Broken Arrow**  
Karim II, 15 Emadaddin St. Downtown. Tel 924 830. Daily 10am.

### Listings

Khairi Bishara depicts the psychological, internal, frustrations and ambitions of all the film's characters, as they are stuck in one long traffic jam. Starring Leila Olout, Mohamed Foad and Sami El-Adl.

**Mia Feli**  
Rivoli II, 2nd July St. Downtown. Tel 375 3053. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm, 8pm & 10pm. Diana Palace, 17 El-Alfi St. Emadaddin. Downtown. Tel 924 727. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

**Starring Hesham Saleh Selim and Sherihan as a husband and wife who, upon being given the opportunity of choosing a new father, choose the same rich man and end up as siblings.**

**Akari El-Asfali (Asphalt Demons)**  
Rivoli II, 2nd July St. Downtown. Tel 375 3053. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Sphinx Sq. Mohammediat. Tel 346 4017. Daily 4pm.

**Osama Fawzi's debut film depicts the lives of a number of microbus drivers, performed by Mahmoud Hemeida and Abdalla Mahmoud and Hassan Hoss.**

**Ya Donia... Ya Gharami (My Life... My Passion)**  
Tiba I, Nasr City. Tel 262 4407. Daily 10.30am, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.

**Magdi Ahmed Ali's debut film explores the intimate lives of three women played by Leila Elwi, Elham Shamine and Hala Sedqi.**

**El-Tahwila (Railway Junction)**  
Tiba II, Nasr City. Tel 262 4407. Daily 10.30am, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.

**This controversial film is the result of Amr Bahassa's first directorial effort.**

**El-Raguel El-Shares (The Savage Man)**  
Lila, 23 Emadaddin St. Downtown. Tel 934 284. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

**Fair Game**  
Tahrir II, Tahrir St. Dokki. Tel 335 5726. Daily 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

**Karim I, 15 Emadaddin St. Downtown. Tel 924 830. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.**

**Starring Cynid Crawford and William Baldwin.**

**Seven**  
MGM, Maadi Grand Mall, Kollety El-Nasr St. Maadi. Tel 352 3066. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.

**The seven deadly sins are seven ways to die.**

**The American President**- El-Horreyi I, El-Horreyi Mall, Romy, Helopolis. Daily 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Ramsis Hilton II, Corniche El-Nil St. Tel 574 7436. Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.

**Jumaji**  
Radio, 24 Talat Harb St. Downtown. Tel 375 6562. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Normandy, 31 El-Ahram St. Helopolis. Tel 258 0254. Daily 12.30pm, 3.30pm.

**Mohamed Nagel Museum**  
Chateau Pyramids, 1000m from the Pyramids, El-Giza. A museum devoted to the paintings of Mohamed Nagel (1888-1956).

**Mahmoud Makhar Museum**  
Tahrir St. Giza. Tel 340 6841. Daily, except Mon. 10am-1pm & 5pm-9pm.

**Indian Films**  
Mansour Abul Kalam Azad Centre for Indian Culture, 23 Talat Harb St. Downtown. Tel 393 3396.

**Disco Dancer 11 July, 4pm**  
Bloody Vengeance 15 July, 4pm. Both films star Mihun Shakarbari.

**University Laws**  
Japanese Cultural Centre, 106 Qasr El-Aini St. Garden City. 11 July, 4pm.

**Directed by Kazuyuki Izutsu (1990)**  
A family in a small town has a textile mill. Yoshiaki, one of the sons, leaves the town after conflicts with his father and becomes a fashion designer. He returns home after the father's death, yet he still faces problems.

**Robert De Niro, a highly professional gangster, and Al Pacino, the cop in charge of arresting him, meet face to face in a powerful confrontation during which their talent reaches its peak. Directed by Michael Mann.**

**Broken Arrow**  
Karim II, 15 Emadaddin St. Downtown. Tel 924 830. Daily 10am.

1pm, 2pm, 4pm & 9pm

**Sudden Death**  
Metro, 35 Talat Harb St. Downtown. Tel 393 3396. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. El-Salam, 15 Abdel-Hamid Badier St. Helopolis. Tel 293 0072. Daily 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.

**Commemorative cinema**  
programmes every Monday. The programme provided is valid through to Sunday after which it is replaced with the cinema.

### MUSIC

**Egyptian Takht**  
Open Air Theatre, Opera House, Giza. Tel 325 0668. 11 July, 8pm. Egyptian traditional music performed by Khaled Abdel-Qader, Nour Tounsi, Nohad Fathalla, Nour Assad and May.

**Music and Song**  
Open Air Theatre, Opera House, Giza. 13 July, 9pm.

**Jazz**  
Open Air Theatre, Opera House, Giza. 13 July, 9pm. Salah Ragab performs.

**Oriental Rhythms**  
Open Air Theatre, Opera House, Giza. 13 July, 9pm. Said El-Artis performs.

**Opera Children's Choir**  
Open Air Theatre, Opera House, Giza. 13 July, 9pm.

**THEATRE**  
Ballo (Fanfare)  
Madinet Nasr Theatre, 1500m from St. Madinet Nasr. Tel 402 0004. Daily 10pm.

**Zambatta El Mahatta (Hallelujah of the Station)**  
Flaming Theatre, Tel 364 9216. Daily, except Tues. 10pm.

**El-Ganzir (The Chain)**  
El-Salam Theatre, Qasr El-Aini. Tel 335 2484. Daily 9pm.

**El-Amira Tanteer (The Princess Awakes)**  
Zaki Tolmaty Hall, El-Taha Theatre, Haba. Tel 93 948. Daily, except Tues. 9.30pm.

**El-Ser Hoda (Lady Hoda)**  
El-Salam Theatre, Haba. Tel 93 948. Daily, except Tues. 9.30pm.

**Nasr El-Kheir Tanteer, Ya Masr (Good Evening Egypt, Agnes)**  
Mohamed Farid Theatre, Emadaddin. Tel 70 013. Daily, except Tues. 9.30pm.

**El-Kharis El Waria (The Map in the City)**  
National Theatre, Giza. Thurs. 9pm.

**El-Zaim (The Leader)**  
El-Ham Theatre, Promenade Road, Giza. Tel 396 1957. Daily, except Tues. 9.30pm.

**Dastour Ya Shama (With Your Permission, Majesty)**  
El-Fann Theatre, Ramsis St. Tel 574 2444. Daily 10pm. Sat & Sun 8pm.

**Norhan Wal Amir (Norhan and The Prince Morgan)**  
Puppet Theatre, Haba. Tel 93 948. Daily 6.30pm.

**Ka'b Aali (High Heels)**  
Radio Theatre, 24 Talat Harb St. Downtown. Tel 375 6562. Daily, except Tues. 9.30pm. Wed & Thurs. 10pm.

**Mama America**  
Qasr El-Nil Theatre, Qasr El-Nil St. Tel 575 0761. Daily 10pm. Mon-Sun 8pm.

**Youssef, starring and directed by Mohamed Sobhi.**

**Bahlool El Istanbul (Bahlool in Istanbul)**  
Ramsis Hilton Theatre, El-Gulab St. Tel 574 7435. Daily, except Mon. 10pm.

**Hazzemni Ya...**  
Giza Theatre, Abdel-Aziz St. Second Manshi. Tel 364 4101. Daily 10pm. Fri & Sun. 8.30pm.

**El-Gamila Wet-Wehshin (The Beautiful and the Ugly)**  
Zamalek Theatre, 13 Shogara El-Dorr St. Zamalek. Tel 341 0666. Daily, except Wed. 10pm.

**All information correct at time of going to press. However, a reminder to check with venues first, since programmes, dates and times are subject to change at very short notice.**

**Please telephone or send information to Listings, Al-Ahram Weekly, Giza St. Cairo. Tel 5786064. Fax 5786089/833.**

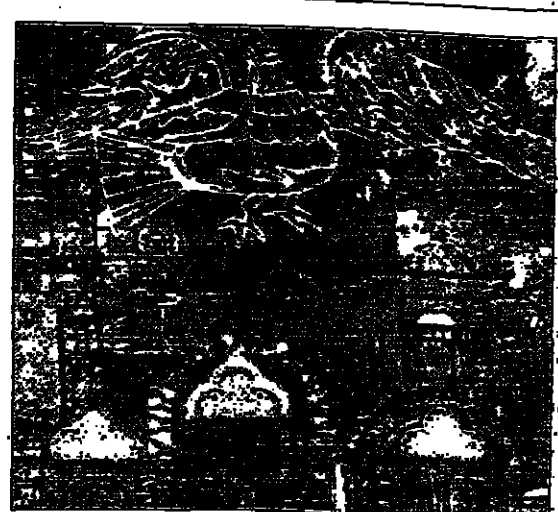
**Compiled by Inji El-Kashaf**

### Around the galleries

**COLOURFUL** windows, doors and traditional household decorations feature prominently in a large number of paintings by Sawwan Abul-Nagga, whose recent works are currently showing at the Centre for Arts, Zamalek. As might be expected, the source of the artist's inspiration appears to be her response to the traditional arts and crafts that remain such a prominent feature of life in Cairo's more popular districts. Stained glass, textiles and other forms of the decorative arts are all in evidence.

Also on exhibit at the Centre for Arts are 30 recent works by Alaa El-Hout. Colour is randomly dispersed across the surface of these paintings as El-Hout allows random configurations to become metaphysically loaded.

Reviewed by Nagwa El-Ashri



Sawwan Abul-Nagga





# A midsummer nightmare

Nehad Selaiha is haunted by visions of terror and violence at the Dionysia World Festival of Contemporary Drama. What tended to be remembered at the event, she discovers, are the bad things

## Plain Talk

I have been intrigued for some time now with the European development from community to union. The path to unity has not been strewn with roses, and the clash of cultures has always been an obstacle. While meetings, conferences and seminars have been discussing what is termed the 'cultural identity of Europe', there have, likewise, been some kind of separatist movements and attempts at asserting the separate cultural identities of the European countries.

I am concentrating on culture because I am now in the middle of reading *Eventi* (News), a very impressive information bulletin about the cultural activities during Italy's six-months presidency of the European Union, which has just ended.

Having followed the activities of the EU for some time now, I can venture to say that whichever country holds the presidency is able to exert a great deal of influence over on the union's activities.

With the Italian presidency, cultural issues prevailed, as a cursory look at the list of cultural events from January to June 1996 confirms. Here in Egypt, we were party to a number of European cultural activities both at El-Hanagar and the Italian Cultural Institute. Several exhibitions and seminars were organised and a number of experts in Egyptology from different European countries gave a series of lectures on subjects related to Egyptian monuments.

The current issue of *Eventi* explains the Italian interest in culture. In the construction of Europe, says the introductory article, it is the cultural implications which are the most delicate and deeply perceived. An important question the bulletin poses is whether or not one can speak of European culture. Is there the slightest common denominator amongst the European countries, a core of feelings, ideals and traditions, that could act as a focus able to transcend and enhance the diversity that constitutes our greatest wealth?

While it is true that the French and Spanish presidencies had already laid the foundations for a consideration of the cultural identity and frontiers of Europe, it is the Italian presidency that gave this issue its due significance. During the past six months the need has been felt to emphasise and highlight the 'cultural aspects' that are wrongly regarded as of secondary importance or even irrelevant during the current debate on the future of the integration process.

The Italian presidency saw the organisation of a number of activities in the fields of theatre, cinema, plastic arts, architecture, and other artistic spheres. Italy is, after all, the country of La Scala, the birthplace of the European Renaissance, of humanism, of Leonardo Da Vinci, Michelangelo, and a whole host of artists who, throughout the *quattrocento* influenced the way an entire continent, and beyond, could view itself.

There is, of course, a great deal more to the Italian Renaissance than the simple discovery of perspective, though that is, in itself, a far from insignificant development. For what is perspective other than the fixing of a viewpoint, the ordering of the material world from a point of view that had first to be determined?

Later, of course, after the highpoint of the Renaissance, ideas that had originated in Italy were disseminated throughout the known world. The result of that dissemination has been of inestimable import in shaping our modern world. It is strange to think that the ideas contained in, say, Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*, could have proved so persuasive. But we have history to support us.

Is it too far fetched to draw a link between Michelangelo's most famous work, the statue of David, and what many Western historians until quite recently would describe as the triumph of the West? In the end I think it is not, since what is Michelangelo's David if it is not a statement of supreme confidence in the ability of mankind to master the world. There he stands, white, marble, hugely arrogant, staring into the middle distance and seeing no obstacle that would prove insurmountable, no hurdle too high for him to leap.

I would suggest that it is far from a coincidence that the great period of Western expansion, the great age of discovery, as it is described, came hot on the heels of the Italian Renaissance. They are the flip-side, one of the other.

Mursi Saad El-Din

It never occurred to me as I wandered dreamily up and down the steep, narrow and winding cobblestone streets of Veroli that afternoon on 19 June, that within only a few hours I would be dragged, mentally screaming, into some of the darkest and fiendishly brutal horror chambers of recent human history. I had been only two hours in that tiny, medieval town, hung up in the mountains between Rome and Napoli, but already, I was feeling quite at home and experiencing an acute sense of well being. Everywhere I looked, I found proof of the goodness of life and the sunny side of human nature: the beaming, friendly faces of the cafe-owners; the old ladies sunning themselves on their doorsteps and chatting cosily; the gaily dressed children noisily playing ball near a fountain off the central piazza; the two young lovers embracing tenderly on the terrace adjoining the Chiesa di S. Salome and framed by the distant hills and the rolling valley underneath. Surely, no evil can come to this little paradise, I complacently thought, and though feeling slightly dizzy because of the heady mountain air I had been gulping in lungfuls, I found myself heartily applauding Nicciola's decision to move her festival from Sienna and the nearby Tuscan hills, where it had opened in 1992, to this charmed spot in the following years.

The move was partly prompted by the complaints about the choice of location made by many of the guests of the first festival; in the words of one, "it was like being marooned in this sparsely populated countryside of folk farmers" where the "viciously cold weather and unending rains made a mess of an open air festival". In Veroli, the weather was much kinder: in the four days I was there it rained only once and was generally mild and dry. At night, out of doors, you needed a coat but, fortunately, no umbrella. But it was not only weather considerations which attracted the young and lively Gaida to Veroli; there was also the moral and material support of the liberal mayor of the town — a valuable asset at a time when funds for cultural activities are becoming increasingly scanty, and the fact that in a small town the problems of transportation are substantially reduced and an annual festival acquires the status of a major event in the life of the community.

As I was turning a corner on my way back to the festival's headquarters I heard a car coming up behind me and automatically, as I had learned to do in my ramblings, I pressed myself against the wall beside me to let it pass; instead, it screeched to a halt and out of it jumped a stunningly attractive young woman, deeply tanned, in a short printed dress that accentuated her willowy figure. She ran up to me smiling and waving, in a spontaneous, child-like burst of joy, introduced herself, then whisked me off to the picturesque, friendly restaurant where the guests of the festival took their meals. It was my first glimpse of Maria Nicoletta Gaida, the founder and president of Dionysia, and it made a lasting impression.

On the way to the restaurant, the driver dropped her off at the open air stadium, on the mountain side, where she was rehearsing that evening's performance. Over a delicious lunch of spaghetti with clams, cooked in olive oil (I could never remember the Italian word for it) and washed down with several glasses of the wine of the region, I kept wondering why a young and beautiful actress like Gaida had suddenly decided back in 1989, to plunge headlong into the arduous, tedious business of founding and organising a theatre festival, and on top with a high political profile as Dionysia turned out to be. The political nature of Dionysia (which takes its name from the annual Athenian festival of the fifth century BC and is obviously meant as a tribute to Dionysus, the god of theatre, wine and vegetation) is made amply clear in the festival's printed guide, which unequivocally states that the festival's objective is "to explore how countries and societies manifest their national and ethnic identities through the dramaturgy of each of their cultures, and to examine the possibility of elaborating a common experience of form and content." More curious still is the fact that Dionysia was meant from the beginning as a forum for playwrights, rather than actors and directors, and used as its model the Eugene O'Neill National Playwrights Conference which is held every summer in Waterford, Connecticut. The idea was to host a number of playwrights from different countries and cultural backgrounds every year and allow them, over a period of two weeks, to direct and rehearse their own new plays, with actors of their own choice, and then present them to the public. In the first year, according to the records, ten new plays by ten internationally renowned playwrights, such as Irene Fornes, Howard Barker, and Wole Soyinka, managed to premiere despite many logistical and funding problems. In the following years we come across fewer and fewer illustrious names as the net is cast wider to bring in good but less known writers from countries as far apart as China, Chile, Albania, and Croatia. The political character of the festival, however, has remained steadily in prominence ever since its first session in Sienna in 1992 and is evidenced by the choice of such topics as the central symposium as 'theatre and fundamentalism', 'theatre and peace' and 'theatre in societies in conflict'. Significantly, it was a play by the Croatian playwright, Slobodan Snajder, about the rape of a Muslim girl in Bosnia, and called *Snake Skin*, which won the most acclaim from the critics and the public in last year's Dionysia.

year's Dionysia.

Our theme this year was 'theatre and memory'; and since our business was remembering, this could, perhaps, explain why two of the six plays offered in the festival were by dead authors and two were not genuinely new productions. Indeed, the general artistic standard of the festival this year left a lot to be desired and with the exception of Roberto Ciulli's production of Brecht's *In the Jungle of the Cities* and Xavier Durringer's fascinatingly repellent, nihilistic dark comedy *Polaroid*. There was very little exciting theatre to be had anywhere in Veroli — except perhaps at the dinner table, at meal times, or in the lovely discussions among the guests. These included writers, artists, critics and academics carefully picked from all over the world and some of them had extremely sensitive, probing and stimulating minds. In the two-day symposium, the thorny issues of cultural identity, cultural pluralism, nationalism, and the definition of history as so many conflicting narratives were aired and grappled with. Among the most interesting speakers were Miguel Angel Gella, from Argentina, Anthony Everitt and Ian Brown, from the UK, and Alisa Solomon, from New York. In her talk, Solomon had refused to equate cultural with national identity and was rewarded at the end with a vociferous attack from a Kurdish nationalist in the audience who accused her of speaking from a privileged stance as an American Jew, that is, as he explained, as a member of the most powerful segment of American society — an anti-Semitic compliment if such a thing exists. She retorted by asking him to look at the state of Israel and the sad results of nationalism there. The same Kurdish gentleman decided to attack me as well on account of what he described as the Egyptian government's lack of support of the Kurdish question. It was then that Chris Torch, an American critic, of Italian extraction, living in Stockholm, stood up to warn against the direction the discussion was sliding into and to remind all present that we were there as individuals, not as representatives of any race, government or regime. Nevertheless, the outburst of the Kurdish nationalist touched a responsive chord somewhere. I had been told the previous day that Kamiran Rauf Majeed, who is currently director of the Theatre Department of the Cultural Institute of Suleimania, had been detained at the border and refused travel permission and would therefore not be able to bring his monodrama, *Scorched Earth*, to the festival. Instead, a young, brilliant Italian actor, Marco Angelini, performed the part of the history teacher, Azad ('free' in Turkish) who returns to his village after 18 years in prison in some unspecified capital (the sentence is passed in the court in three different languages — Turkish, Arabic and Persian) and finds it deserted and torn apart by bullets and explosions. Azad had one day dared to mention the history of his people in the classroom; that was his crime. The play was performed in Italian, but I was lucky to get the text in English, thanks to the diligence of the festival's wonderful staff, and found its anguished lyricism haunting and deeply moving. It was not just the plight of the Kurdish that shaped itself and came to life on the printed pages, but the plight of any people without the security and freedom of a homeland. While agreeing with Alisa Solomon on the ills and negative aspects of nationalism, short of changing human nature itself, I could not think of another way to end the long agony and persecution of the Kurdish people and their like.

*Scorched Earth* was painful enough in the reading, but nothing could equal the fiendish horrors recounted by the characters of Peter Weiss' *Investigation* which I watched on my first night in Veroli. The performance (by the Wuppertaler Bühnen Theatre, directed by Holk Freytag) was in German, and having taken the unwise precaution of reading this voluminous dramatic reworking of the Auschwitz trials beforehand, I was grateful I could not understand a word of what the actors were saying and was spared a repetition of the harrowing experience of the text. The performance started late, on account of the European Cup match between Germany and Italy, and took place at the Polivalente (or open-air stadium). Before the show, we all watched the match on a gigantic, white screen that was part of the set. Within two hours, the images on that screen changed dramatically. Instead of a peaceful soccer game, we were treated to spine-chilling slides of different parts of Auschwitz and of the pitiful personal belongings of the victims. Some found the slides vile and pointless, but for someone like me, who is not frequently exposed to such sights, they were shattering and vividly brought to mind the more recent atrocities in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The rest of the set consisted of over 80 chairs, lined up in rows and lying on their backs. As the trials progressed and the actors took turns at playing defendants and witnesses, they stood the chairs upright,



Top, Xavier Durringer's *Polaroid*, and above, Peter Weiss' *Investigation*, directed by Holk Freytag: a relentlessly grim verdict on human nature — a statement, in visual terms, that the victims of yesterday are the ruthless persecutors of tomorrow

and, finally, at the end, threw them together in a heap, as if preparing for a gigantic bonfire. Freytag did his best with Weiss' unwieldy and perhaps ultimately unstageable 11 cantos (modelled on Dante's *Inferno*), but the horrors of Hitler are still too close to us to allow for a safe aesthetic distance. The most controversial aspect of the production was dressing all the actors in white military uniforms which they partially stripped off when doubling as the victims and witnesses. It puzzled some and angered many, but for me it seemed a relentlessly grim verdict on human nature — a statement, in visual terms, that the victims of yesterday are the ruthless persecutors of tomorrow.

Compared to the *Investigation*, Roberto Ciulli's version of Brecht's only expressionistic play, *In the Jungle of the Cities*, performed indoors in the Piazzetta dello Sport, was positively exhilarating. Its theatrical vitality derived not only from the superb performances of the actors of the Theatre an der Ruhr which Ciulli heads, but also from the plethora of visual metaphors. Ciulli constantly ropes in. These were drawn from a wide range of sources which included, among others, American gangster movies, the famous Tarzan films, TV game and chat shows, Chinese opera, the circus, the wrestling arena, strip-tease shows, the animal world, and the theatre of the absurd, particularly Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*.

Sometimes the structure of the performance threatened to disintegrate and collapse under the weight of all this rich visual embroidery. The first time I saw the production it actually cracked in places and the total stage image seemed at moments badly splintered and distractingly cluttered. The second time I saw it, I was happy to discover that Ciulli had cut it down by 40 minutes, removed a lot of the debris and given his crazy mixture of images form and coherence; it gained in focus, concentration, elegance and pathos without losing its original disturbing brutality, its tenderness or riveting energy.

Two more productions were given at the same venue which boasts some of the most uncomfortable seats I ever sat on: the first was *Polaroid* by the young and famous French playwright Xavier Durringer who often works in collaboration with artists from different cul-

tures. In one project, he worked with the Creoles from New Orleans. In *Polaroid*, the final text was the result of work, undertaken some time ago, with a young mixed group which included some Algerians born to expatriate parents in France. As the title suggests, the play consists of a series of portraits which, as they flash in succession, build up to what amounts to a brief social chronicle, at once realistic and bizarre and alternately tender, violent and grotesquely funny. The portraits, which sometimes take the form of monologues, sometimes of dramatic sketches are all of lost and alienated young people, of different cultures, living in the slums, on the outer fringe of society. The sordidness of the characters' existence and the toughness and brutality of their shared environment are counter-balanced in the text by Durringer's sensitive and poetic use of language. In performance, this feature came

across only fitfully and the acting occasionally verged on the hysterical. Still, the set was good and I found its dreary metallic drabness and studied vulgar crudity quite compelling.

At the same sports palace, we also watched *Tattooed Skin* by a playwright from Macedonia called Goran Stefanovski, performed by the Roman Theatre Prahle, the first theatre in the Romani ghetto of a large American city where an ethnologist from Macedonia arrives to study the conditions of the Macedonian immigrants there. The acting and set suggested a naturalistic type of play with lots of family conflicts and violent confrontations. I suppose that without the language barrier I would have enjoyed it. As it was, it seemed to drag on endlessly and what with the devilishly uncomfortable chairs, it took all one's willpower to stick to the end. I wondered how the Italian *The Choice* by Giuseppe Manfredi would have fared if it had been performed at the Palazzetto instead of the old Chiesa where we saw it. I was prepared to bet that half way through, the hall would have been empty. It was only courtesy to my hosts and my extremely comfortable seat which persuaded me to watch this dim-witted piece of wet, stultified writing till the end. As I valiantly fought to keep my eyes open, I kept wondering why the saintly hero (the historical Bruno of Cologne), was taking so long over his death and iched to give him a hand to get it over with.

On Saturday 22, Dionysia '96 wound up with a repeat performance of Weiss' *Investigation*, and for lack of a better thing to do, I watched once more. The lively David De Or concert which followed helped nothing in dispelling the gloom I had sunk into. The following day we left Veroli for Rome. As the car sped down the mountain, away from the tiny town which grew tinier and tinier until it slid out of view, I remembered what the guest from Poland, Malgorzata Dzielwulaska (whom I simply called Margaret) had said at the symposium — that "in looking at the past, we should try to remember not only the bad things, but the good things as well". In Veroli, we had only remembered the bad things.



# Where it all began



The desert north of Lake Chad (right) as seen by German explorer Nachtigal in the 1870s. Similar scenes must have been common in the drainage areas of the southwestern desert of Egypt during wet intervals when early humans inhabited the desert. Rains changed the landscape of the desert dramatically.



THE DESERTS of Egypt are part of the great North African Sahara and are sometimes referred to as the eastern Sahara. Today they are among the driest regions on earth and are inhospitable to man. Large tracts of them are totally deserted, others are sparsely populated by a few roaming nomads. In spite of the marginal place of the deserts in the life of present-day Egypt, they did play an important role in the past in determining its history and they are expected to play an equally important role in the making of its future.

In this article an attempt is made to decipher the role of the desert in the rise and fall of the hydraulic civilization of Ancient Egypt which rose along the banks of the River Nile. Prior to the rise of that civilization, the desert received enough rain, allowing it to be the site of intense human activity which was in many ways more advanced than that of the dwellers of the Nile. There seems to be a correlation between aridity and the rise of the civilization along the banks of the Nile which took off only after the desert had become arid. There is also an indication that the introduction and adoption of innovations and technological breakthroughs by that civilization was related, in large measure, to the massive human movements that usually follow episodes of climatic deterioration.

For a long time these movements did not inflict upon Egypt the harm they did to Mesopotamia. Unlike Mesopotamia, Egypt is bordered by barren deserts which made the appearance of a menacing power along its immediate borders impossible, thus sheltering it from frequent and massive foreign attacks and giving it long periods of stability. Occasional raids by the Nubians from the south or the Libyans from the west lacked the weight of numbers and sophistication that made the barbarian attacks such a serious problem to Mesopotamia.

For ca 60,000 years during the last Ice Age and until around 10,000 BC, the Egyptian desert, like many other parts of the Sahara, was uninhabited and almost totally deserted. During that time the desert was cold, without rain and with a meagre fauna and flora. The only people who inhabited the land of Egypt were clustered around the banks of the Nile. As the Ice Age came to an end, the desert and the world at large underwent dramatic changes which had far-reaching effects on human communities.

Temperatures rose, and the ice sheets which had covered a quarter of the Northern Hemisphere's land surface melted, allowing plants and animals to spread northward into latitudes which, for several thousand years, had been too cold to support them. At the same time the deserts which occupied large areas of what are now the tropics receded as much of the water which had been locked up in the ice sheets was released to fall as rain. Milder temperatures and frequent rainfall meant that resources were more abundant and varied than before and hunter-gatherer groups were able to intensify their quest for food and to make monumental breakthroughs in this direction.

The 5000 years that followed the retreat of the ice sheets of the last glacial were crucial years in the history of mankind. They witnessed the discovery of agriculture, the domestication of animals, the establishment of the first farming villages and walled towns, the manufacture of pottery and the smelting of metals.

## When the desert was green

IN THE Sahara the wet interval which followed the retreat of the last glacial epoch lasted for a period of ca 5000 years. During that interval, which is known as the Holocene Wet Interval, the monsoonal rain front of the African Sahel shifted to the north, bringing summer rains to large parts of the Sahara. The effect of that interval on the landscape of the Sahel region and the Saharan desert in general forms the subject of a large number of works.

The rains affected the flow of the Nile. They also affected the central Saharan massifs where a Mediterranean type woodland appeared, and the large stretches of the lower ground around their edges which developed a grassland cover. A large number of lakes studded the entirety of the Sahara. Some were ephemeral, fed by the summer rains that came with the shifting rain front.

Lake Chad, which had disappeared completely around 20,000 years ago because of the aridity of the tropical latitudes at the height of the last Ice Age, was re-formed at about 11,000 BC with the oncoming of the rains of the Holocene Wet Interval and was fed by rainwater from the Tibesti massif. The lake eventually grew to over 400,000 square kilometres in area, almost 16 times its present-day size. During the Holocene Wet Interval, the level of this lake fluctuated greatly, indicating that the interval was interrupted by arid episodes.

The rains must have changed the landscape of the deserts of Egypt drastically. There are four peaks in which the rains were at their maximum. The earlier of these reached Egypt probably some 11,000 years ago. I say probably because none of the sediments that were transported into the lakes by these early rains carry any datable materials as no humans came to make use of this new environment. The earliest humans to make such use were associated with the second wave of rains. Radiocarbon dates of the remains of these early desert dwellers in northern Sudan and southern Western Desert of Egypt show that most of these came around 7500 BC.

These early humans colonised the desert for about 1800 years. They were hunting-gathering communities that led a nomadic life. During the dry season they lived on the deeper levels of the ephemeral lakes that studded the region at that time moving to the surrounding higher ground during the rainy season. The detailed study of the prehistory of one of these ephemeral past lakes in Nabta, situated some 100km west of Abu Simbel in the southern Western Desert of Egypt, shows that the sites of the early inhabitants of this lake had large concentrations of artefacts with one or more hearths, probably representing repeated occupations by small groups such as family or extended family.

The artefacts that these early settlers used represented an advancement in stone tool technology based on the production of small blades or microliths only a centimetre or two in length, which were shaped into either a point or a barb. These microliths were highly adaptable and used for a variety of purposes. They were usually mounted on bone or wood hafts and used as arrow heads, knives, sickles and other composite tools. They played a crucial role in enhancing man's skills in hunting and gathering techniques.

The sites have a large number of gazelle and hare bones as well as a small number of cattle bones which, according to one interpretation, could have been domestic. If accurate this record would precede any other record of domesticated cattle in the entire Sahara by at least 2000 years. It would also show that the cattle must have been driven into the desert by these early settlers for they could not have been part of the natural fauna of a desert which had an annual precipitation rate of barely 50mm. Cattle are thirsty creatures and they must drink every day if they are to survive.



**By 6000 BC Egyptians had already invented agriculture — not in the Nile valley however but in the desert. In this study, part of a larger work (under publication), RUSHDI SAID provides evidence to show that the challenge of an increasingly arid environment was the motive force behind the pre-dynastic Egyptians' triumphant battle with nature, and the birth of Egyptian civilisation**

These settlers were also intensive gatherers of legumes, fruits, tubers and grains including sorghum and millet. All of these plants were morphologically wild. Today they grow wild in the Sahel and their presence in southern Egypt indicates that the margin of the Sahel was at least 300km farther north than it is today. Most sites contain grinding stones that were probably used in grinding grain.

At 6700 BC there was a period of aridity which lasted for about 200 years during which time the desert was abandoned. When the rains came back around 6500 BC, the desert was colonised by people who lived in more permanent settlements with wattle and daub houses, 4-5 metres in diameter, having central hearths. These settlers were first in the manufacture of pottery that was decorated with a distinctive "wavy-line" pattern made by dragging a catfish spine across the surface of the wet clay. This type of pottery was not kiln-fired. It was probably fired in open hearths.

These settlers collected plant foods which remained important for their diet as shown by the presence of a large number of grinding stones in the sites. Dry grasslands are the natural habitats of many cereals. By 6000 BC there is evidence that sorghum and millet had been domesticated, while barley was introduced at a slightly later time from western Asia. In this respect the desert dwellers were ahead of the Nile Valley dwellers in the introduction of agriculture by at least 800 years.

Animal remains are common in the sites and are not very much different from those of the Early Neolithic sites except for the fact that the cattle are decidedly domestic and that, starting around 5800 BC, the goat (or sheep?) appears for the first time. Saharan rock art gives a vivid picture of the range of wild animals in the region at that time — elephant, rhinoceros, hippo, giraffe — while the frequent portrayal of domestic cattle, after 6000 BC reflects the transition which was being made during that period towards pastoralism.

The social organisation of these new settlers also seems to have been extremely advanced. It was such that they dug communal wells, some with shallow basins on the side. They seem to have had what looks like a communal centre where cattle seem to have been sacrificed. There were no houses in this site but there were abundant hearths and deep storage pits. The site is assumed to have been a centre for sacrificing cattle because it had an exceptionally large number of cattle bones. Living sites do not have that number of bones because early Saharan cattle were not slaughtered and were used primarily for milk and blood and as a reliable and renewable source of food, a resource that greatly aided — and probably made possible — life in the desert.

In late Neolithic times at ca 4000 BC, desert communities show the first signs of social stratification that made possible the erection of enormous megalithic complexes. At one of these in the Nabta plays, south Western Desert, nine large unfinished stones, two to three metres high, were dragged from the surrounding areas, put in an upright position and aligned in a north-south line 500 metres long. Other small stones were dragged and arranged in circles.

We do not know the significance of these structures but their presence indicates that the societies of these desert communities, like their contemporaries in the Nile Valley, had become stratified rather than egalitarian. A privileged class must have appeared in these societies that could organise and order others to carry out this kind of work.

The desert communities which we have just described lived in the south Western Desert of Egypt and formed part of that great pastoralist culture that developed in the stretches of the great Sahara that opened up with the change of climate that accompanied the retreat of the ice sheets of the last glacial. They were ahead of all other groups that lived in other parts of Egypt, including the Nile Valley in the domestication of cattle, the discovery of agriculture and the firing of pottery.

## The rise of civilization

WITH the total desiccation that started to befall the desert from around 3800 BC, its inhabitants withdrew to more hospitable areas and only a few remained in the oases or in the Red Sea hills where scanty rainfall lingered. The present-day inhabitants of these enclaves (the Ababda, Bisharin, Hadendawa & Beni Amer in the Red Sea hills, and the Siwis in the Eastern Sahara) preserve customs and speak languages that could shed light on the birthplace of their ancestors who once occupied the great Sahara and produced that pioneering culture.

The desiccation seems to have touched also other areas in the Middle East from which waves of immigrants came to settle in the Nile Valley. These settlers seem to have left a great impact on

Egypt. It is interesting to note here that many of the major technological breakthroughs that Egypt witnessed across its history coincided with periods of desiccation and the waves of immigrants that came with them. In the period of aridity, which separated the last two waves of rain of the Holocene Wet Interval (5400-5200 BC), the art of agriculture came to the Nile Valley. The oldest agriculture in Egypt is recorded in the Fayoum. A culture appeared in the wake of this interval. This culture is so different from the Terminal Paleolithic culture which preceded it, that most authors believe that it must have been brought about by a new population in Egypt.

Other changes occurred also with the beginning of the end of that wet interval at around 3800 BC, when a total change in the material culture of the valley dwellers took place. The former bifacial flint industry was replaced by a developed blade technique; pottery was improved by the use of better and special kinds of clay and by the use of reducing fires to make a coloured pottery. Crude mud bricks were made for the first time and carpentry came into being as a craft. The art of smelting and casting metal was introduced making the use of metal more common. Most, if not all, these innovations were known to the people of the Near East who seem to have transferred them to Egypt as they came to settle in the valley in waves whenever their lands suffered a drought.

The scene now moves to the Nile River where an aggressive civilization began developing along its banks. In the meantime, the desert, while occupying a secondary position, was vital to the rising civilization of the Nile Valley for across it lay the trade routes that linked that civilization with the world and in it were the raw materials that added to that civilization's prosperity. The annexation of these desert frontiers took a long time. As late as Ancient Egypt's Fourth Dynasty, military expeditions were still being launched to "hack up" and bring under control the "sand dwellers" of the oases and the remnant grasslands of the Western Desert.

## The desert as supplier of materials

THE SETTLERS of the valley scoured the desert for its resources. Foremost among the materials that the new elite of the rising civilization along the river sought were the precious materials whose acquisition became the primary concern of these elites as the society became increasingly hierarchical. Striking in appearance and limited in availability, these materials conferred upon their possessors the prestige which was intimately linked to the acquisition and maintenance of power.

I call such exotic goods, which are of no practical use but are intended to be seen and to impress thus enhancing one's status and rank, a "powerfact" rather than an artefact. From the earliest of times humans have devoted enormous effort and energy to the creation and acquisition of items that have little practical use but are nonetheless valued for their cultural, symbolic or religious significance. Such items often play a major role in social organisation by acting as indicators of rank and power, and sometimes as repositories of wealth.

The earliest precious materials that were used as powerfacts were organic: seashells, ivory and bone. Necklaces of perforated teeth and shells are known from Upper Paleolithic burials dated some 30,000 years ago. In the Neolithic period substances of mineral origin, notably copper and gold, were added to the inventory of valuable materials that were intended to impress and strengthen the social position of their owners.

Powerfacts seem to have been extremely useful to the rising new elites of pre-dynastic Egypt. It is curious that the search for powerfacts rather than artefacts was the primary motive that led to some of the greatest technological breakthroughs in human history, such as the mastery of metals. It also led to the enhancement of trade. For a large portion of the Old World from about 4000 BC on, there were linkages

— forms of exchange — that involved societies from Hindu Kush to Egypt and the Balkans that were primarily engaged in the exchange of these powerfacts. The lapis lazuli that we find in Egyptian pre-dynastic graves probably came from Badakshan 5000 km away in north-eastern Afghanistan and there are many other examples of such luxury goods travelling long distances.

In this article I shall deal only with gold and copper, the two metals which left a great impact on the development of early societies. Both metals were used first as powerfacts. Copper and gold occur naturally in the metallic state. Gold is the more likely to be discovered and used first, partly because its occurrence in the form of glittering and attractive yellow particles and partly because of its great malleability since it is readily shaped into simple ornaments. In Egypt, however, although gold occurs plentifully in certain localities and native copper very rarely, if at all, copper objects were found to be of earlier date than those of gold. However, the evidence for an earlier use of gold may be concealed by the fact the earliest gold may not have been buried, or, if it was, the graves may have been robbed.

## Gold

GOLD IS by far the powerfact par excellence. It is a metal from which no useful artefact can be made for it is too soft. Nevertheless, it has been and still is one of the most highly-prized and sought-after materials in all parts of the world. Its high value is due, in part, to the fact that, when sufficiently pure in composition, it does not tarnish or discolour like other metals; it is also rare and durable.

The gold-bearing region of Egypt occurs in the Eastern Desert where no less than 100 mines were worked out in Ancient Egyptian times. These mines were divided, according to Ancient Egyptian records, into three main groups according to the access roads that led to them. The northern group included the south Eastern Desert mines that were reached by Wadis Hamammat and Akadi; the middle group included the Nubian Desert mines that were reached by Wadis Allagi and Gabgaba; and the southern group included the mines that were on the Nubian Nile itself. The gold that was brought from these groups of mines was referred to in Ancient Egyptian documents as the gold of Coptos, the gold of Wawat and the gold of Kush respectively.

The gold of Coptos was perhaps the oldest known and the one that gave the pre-dynastic settlers of the Nile, who had access to it, the wealth and power that enabled them to conquer and unify the entire country. This district is noticeably poor in other resources and its ascendancy seems to have been possible only by its control of these mines. In the annals of Tuthmosis III, there is a record of the weight of gold brought into Egypt from Wawat and Kush. During three years of his reign more than 830 kilograms of gold were extracted.

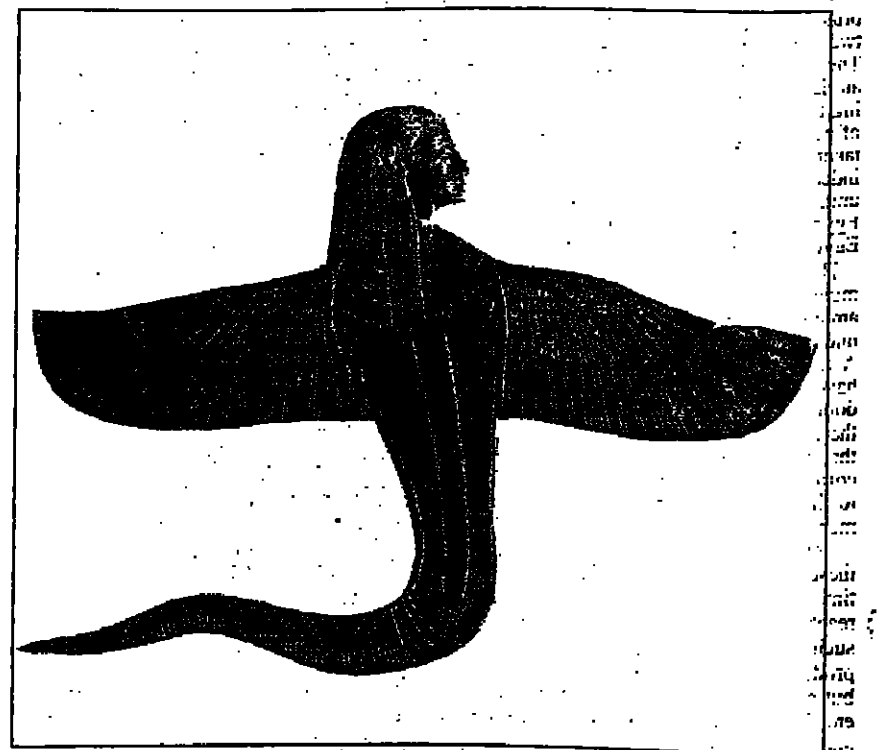
The extraction of gold is easier from deposits of loose sand and gravel in which gold particles occur than from hard rock. These sand and gravel placer deposits form the alluvium of the wadis which drain gold-bearing rocks and in which particles of gold are trapped. In the Eastern Desert there are alluvial workings of immense extent, the country giving the appearance of having been "ploughed".

The total number of ancient workings in veins of quartz is 154, of which about 77 were worked in Ancient Egypt (prior to Ptolemaic times). Some of the mines were worked to a depth of 35 metres. But whether alluvial (placer) deposits or veins of quartz, the Ancient Egyptians were thorough prospectors and no workable deposits have been discovered that they overlooked. At the beginning of the century several of these old mines were reopened.

The amount of gold that was extracted from these mines was in the order of 84,074oz (2614kg) from 1902-1919 and 2864oz (89kg) from 1920-1927. The mines closed because of the difficulty and cost of the work. These figures show that the Egyptian mines provided ancient Egypt with most of the gold used especially during the earlier periods, and that it was even sufficient to permit the export of part of it, as mentioned in El-Amarna letters. Obviously additional gold must have come from the lands conquered as one of the fruits of victory after war. The 10 gold ingots weighing 6.5 kilograms of Twelfth Dynasty date found at Tod in Upper Egypt were probably presents from abroad.

## Copper

COPPER, which played an important role in the development of human societies, was first used as a powerfact and not as an artefact. The earliest copper objects in Egypt come from pre-dynastic graves of Badari ca 4000 BC. They were all decorative items such as beads, stripes, pins and trinkets. It took close to 800 years for the Egyptians to make a tool out of copper. Prior to the mastery of



GOLD: "Powerfact" par excellence





Desert dwellers may have introduced agriculture some 800 years ahead of Nile Valley inhabitants. Some records suggest that domesticated cattle were driven into the desert by early settlers

the art of metal extraction from its ores, early users in other parts of the world had used native copper which is rare in nature.

There is only one occurrence of native copper in Egypt at Wadi Baba in Sinai. It is difficult to know whether this occurrence provided the Badarians with the copper which they used for their flintknives. The ancient working at this locality is difficult to date. Whether the copper that was used in pre-dynastic times came from this source or from another source through trade, the makers of these flintknives must have had an understanding of the smelting process which involves the softening and rendering brittle the metal by heating before hardening by cold hammering.

The knowledge of the extraction of the metal from its ores came with the rise of the Nagada II culture around 3600 BC. It probably was done by heating malachite, the green carbonate ore of copper, which was extensively used in pre-dynastic Egypt for painting around the eyes and for producing a blue colour in glaze at an earlier date than that of the use of the metal itself. The extraction of the metal from malachite occurs at a comparatively low temperature which can be reached in an ordinary campfire or a "hole in the ground" fire. However, such fires do not produce the reducing conditions that are necessary for the completion of the process of metal separation. These conditions can be reached in a simple pottery kiln such as was used at that time.

Pre-dynastic societies looking for the occurrences of malachite ore seem to have come across the important exposure of Gebel Maghara in Sinai at a very early date. This occurrence was exploited for its copper ores during most of the history of exploitation are the extensive heaps of copper slag, chips of copper ore and the large number of broken crucibles that were left behind at that site from the time of the old, middle and new kingdoms. Evidence of pre-dynastic mining is inferred from the chemical composition of the copper objects of that time which is similar to that of the ore. The mining of the ore in the early periods must have consisted merely in the extraction of the ore from surface deposits by scraping or dislodging it with flint tools.

The making of tools, weapons and other artefacts of copper was possible only after the mastery of the arts of smelting, casting and fusing the metal. That mastery came in late Nagadan time, ca 100 years before the rise of Ancient Egypt. The melting of copper needs a temperature of 1083 degrees celsius, which could be reached only in special furnaces. It is remarkable that in spite of the fact that such furnaces were known as early as Badarian time they were not used in smelting or fusing copper. The closed chamber furnace was used only for the making of glazed steatite objects such as beads, amulets, scarabs etc., found in large numbers in the graves of that period. It was not used in melting, fusing or casting the metal except at a considerably later time.

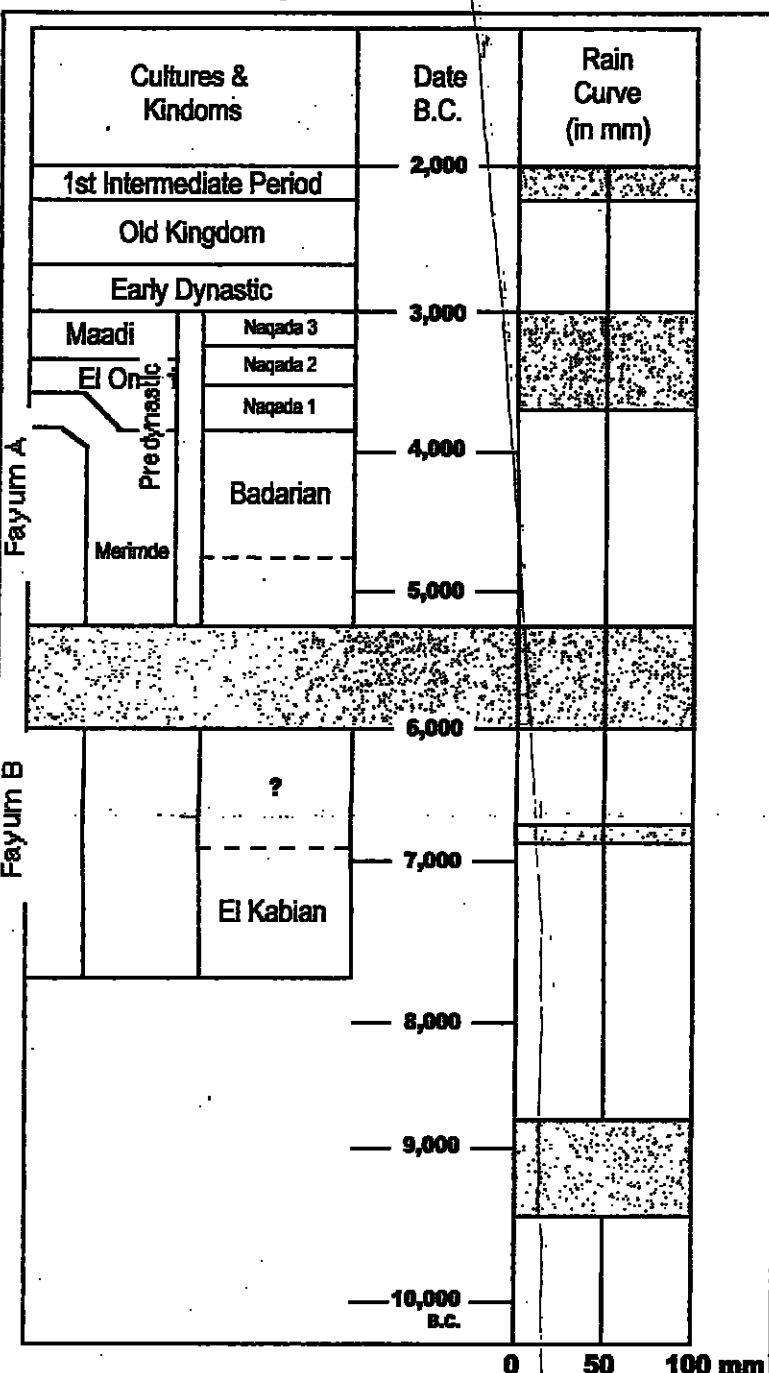
These arts were practiced only in late Nagadan time, barely 100 years prior to the rise of Menes, the founder of Ancient Egypt. It took the Ancient Egyptians close to 1000 years to make artefacts of copper. Fusing makes possible the making of big and composite pieces of metal while casting renders the shaping of the metal quick and easy. The earliest remains of a furnace used in smelting copper are in the copper mining area in Sinai. They consist of a hole in the ground about 70cm deep surrounded by a stone wall through which there are two blast holes. The first moulds into which the melted metal was cast were made of clay.

With the mastery of the arts of casting and fusing, copper became extensively used in tool and weapon making starting from the First Dynasty. It became the chief metal used up to Middle Kingdom times. The search for its ores took the Egyptians to the farthest corners of the desert. Old workings have been reported in the Umm Samiuki and Abu Swayel sulphide deposits in the South Eastern Desert, in the Wadi Dars and Gebel Al-Zeit areas in the northern Eastern Desert, in Sinai and in Timna in the Negev Desert in present-day Israel.

Ores were also obtained through trade from the Levant and Cyprus. During New Kingdom times and under Tutmosis III, these two countries were annexed to the empire that Egypt had built. The discovery of a shipwreck off Cape Gellidonya in southern Anatolia has yielded valuable information about maritime trade during that period. Little has survived of the ship itself, but its cargo of copper ingots and scrap metalwork, which had probably been taken on board at Cyprus, was recovered. Scarab talismans, a cylinder seal, and benenate weights graduated in Egyptian and Syrian units suggest that the vessel was of Canaanite origin destined to Egypt. Active trade in copper must have been going on between Egypt and the Levant and Cyprus.

The amount of copper that was extracted from the Egyptian mines is estimated to have been in the range of 6000 tons. This amount seems to have been sufficient for the needs of the country until about the 18th Dynasty when copper was imported from Asia. This amount is small by modern standards but seems to have been enough to satisfy the needs of Egypt until New Kingdom times. It must be remembered that the greater proportion of the Ancient Egyptians did not use copper in their daily life and that copper was the king's monopoly and was dispensed from his coffers to the makers of weapons and tools; the tools were given to the artisans and builders of temples and other public monuments.

Copper tools were used in a variety of ways. Foremost among these was stone grinding which was perfected in late pre-dynastic times producing the magnificent stone vase industry which reached its zenith in the early dynastic period. Nowhere else has a wealth of beautifully made, handsome stone vases been produced. The stones employed include not only the soft alabaster but also the hard diorite, granite, quartz, porphyry, schist, basalt etc. Thousands of these vases were found in early dynastic tombs and in the Step Pyramid at Saqqara. In the third and fourth dynasties immediately following, we have the phenomenal working of stone for building pyramid tombs and mortuary and other temples; the oldest and largest stone buildings in the world belong to this period. The hard stone statues of this period have long been a source of wonder and admiration on account of their excellence.



Curve showing fluctuations of rain measured in millimetres per year, plotted against time and cultures of Ancient Egypt. Hatched areas are arid time intervals

## Bronze

WHILE copper remained the main metal in Egypt, other civilizations had discovered bronze, an alloy made by mixing copper and tin. Bronze has several advantages over copper. It is harder, especially when hammered, and it can be easily cast because of its lower melting point. Bronze was first made in western Asia and was used in Mesopotamia and India 1000 years before the knowledge of it spread to Egypt. Although there may have been a few sporadic importations of bronze into Egypt, possibly even as early as the Fourth Dynasty, it was not in frequent use in the making of tools until the end of the Middle Kingdom and it was only from the 18th Dynasty onwards that it was used for weaponry.

That lag in the use of bronze and in the adoption of the new technique of chariot warfare, which had been mastered by the hill people living in the desert fringes of Syria and Palestine, cost Egypt its independence. Tribesmen from the north-east, the Hyksos, descended upon Egypt and occupied its capital in the year 1680 BC. It took Egypt close to 110 years to adopt and perfect the new gear and to learn the value of bronze. A local princeling of Thebes led a rebellion against the Hyksos and drove them out of the valley ca 1570 BC.

The conquest of Egypt by the Hyksos brought many technical innovations. Apart from the chariot (and with it the spoke wheel) the following fighting equipment are owed to these Asiatics: the strong composite bow and metal arrow-heads, improved types of daggers, swords and battle-axes, and probably also body armor and the helmet. Among other technological transfers was the art of making bronze by melting and mixing the component metals and the use of bowl-bellows as a more effective means of forcing the essential fire. Both advances were familiar to the Egyptian in the early part of the 18th Dynasty. By 19th Dynasty time, the Egyptians had perfected the use of bronze in manufacturing weapons and had become a major power to be contended with.

Recent excavations by the Hildesheim Museum have uncovered at Qantir-Piramesse, eastern Delta, a vast Ramesside (19th Dynasty) metal industry complex covering at least 30,000sqm. The site was first used as a casting ground to which several multi-functional factories were attached. To these was added a charcoal factory at a later time. The workshops handled a multiplicity of crafts including the processing of stone, wood, leather and bone similar to an assembly line. Small firing pits and huge amounts of metallic finds, waste and slag as well as metal-working tools are evidence that metallic implements as well as glass were produced. The complex was primarily intended for the production of metallic weapons some of which were made in foreign style.

Among the extraordinary finds in this area were Hittite shield-moulds that were apparently used for the production of metal applications, bronze horse-bits, a bronze nave-hub of a chariot, daggers and different types of Egyptian and foreign projectiles and tools. The factories were manned by Egyptian as well as non-Egyptian workers. Metal working processes included casting, embossing, punching and riveting. Many of the finds show that these 19th Dynasty workshops must have represented the state-of-the-art high temperature industries of their day. The furnace installations including fragments of tuyeres and wooden tongs that could handle crucibles even when loaded with liquid metal attest to a high level of technology.

The discovery of what may be called, in modern jargon, a "mini-industrial complex" in Lower Egypt, in addition to the one



already known from Medinet Habu in Upper Egypt, shows that the builders of the Ancient Egyptian empire recognised the importance of keeping abreast with the technological innovations of their time. In its heyday the empire was importing the copper ore from areas which were under its rule and along sea and land routes that were under its control. In addition to the copper ore, the empire also supplied the factories with the combustibles that were necessary for the firing of the two high temperature industries of bronze and glass.

The main combustible used was charcoal which was obtained from wood by removing its volatile constituents through burning. Egypt is poor in wood and has always imported a portion of its requirements. In the Palermo Stone (inscribed in the Fifth Dynasty) it is stated that as early as the reign of Snefru (Third Dynasty), 40 ships laden with timber were brought to Egypt. In New Kingdom times, Egypt certainly did not have the wood that could sustain its military industrial industries. One must assume that the amount of wood imports at the time were so enormous that they must have fully occupied the sea routes of the day.

## Iron

NO SOONER had the Egyptians mastered the art of bronze making than the surrounding civilizations discovered a new and considerably cheaper metal. The use of iron changed the military balance drastically and made obsolete the bronze upon which the aristocratic charioteers of Egypt depended. Iron is produced from ores that are far more abundant than those of copper and especially those of tin, needed to make bronze. The technique for working iron is, however, far more difficult. Both copper and tin are easily reduced from their ores. Bronze is easily melted and can be cast into ingots to be hammered to shape.

The metallurgy of iron is different in many ways. It does not melt except at temperatures far above those of any primitive fire, although its ores are easily reduced in the solid state by heating when surrounded by charcoal. This yields a metallic sponge which can be consolidated and purified from its impurities by hammering at a white heat. Once consolidated the iron is extremely malleable when hot and can be easily forged to shape, while pieces can be solidly joined together by hammer-welding.

The fact that iron can be shaped only by hammering while hot in contrast to copper which can be shaped by cold hammering may have been one of the reasons why it became known to man at a much later date than copper. Hammering while red-hot requires a special hammer that the Egyptians did not have; the only kind of hammer the Egyptian knew until late, apart from wooden mallets, was a stone hammer without a handle, a tool with which it would not have been possible to have beaten red-hot metal. Another reason for the late mastery of iron may have been the extreme difficulty of its casting, for iron turns to liquid at the high temperature of 1530 degrees celsius which is too high a temperature to have been obtained in ancient times. Its smelting requires special furnaces which the Egyptians did not have.

The use of iron had important economic as well as political and military effects. The new metal was sufficiently abundant to make it possible for farmers to have sickle blades, plough shares and other agricultural tools made of iron. This gave an increased efficiency to farming and helped bring about a surplus that was exchanged for artisan products. This act in motion a process that

revolutionised the economy and social structure of human societies. It also led to a revolution in military gear which was now being made of this hard metal which gave its user a distinct advantage over the users of bronze.

The date at which the Egyptians learned how to smelt and work iron is uncertain, though it is clear that Egypt was the last country in the Middle East to enter the Iron Age. The very few instances of the use of minute amounts of iron before the New Kingdom are no indication that the metal was recognised as such, and, although examples are somewhat more numerous from the end of the 18th Dynasty onwards, it would appear that even in the 22nd Dynasty the metallurgy of iron, already mastered by the Hittites some 500 years before, was still at a primitive level. Not until the sixth century BC was iron production instituted on any scale, while in Nubia the industry may have been half a century older.

As a result of this tardy entry into the Iron Age, Egypt lost the premier place it had held for a long time; its empire was gone, the authority of its kings was no longer respected beyond the confines of their country and the trade routes along which were carried the combustibles that could have made iron making possible were lost.

With the close of the imperial age the grandeur of Egyptian history ended and the land became no longer the land of mighty kings and statesmen as it used to be. After a 500-year-period in which Egypt lay torpid and inactive within her borders it was invaded by Asiatics who came from the same borderlands as their predecessors of the Bronze Age: the desert fringes of the fertile crescent. Between 675 and 663 BC the land was ravished and burnt by the iron-equipped army of Assyria.

IN THE year 1160 BC, Ramses III, the last of the great pharaohs of Egypt, died. With his death the glorious history of Ancient Egypt came to a close after some 3000 years of a civilization that dominated the world's history and pioneered in every aspect of human endeavour. The early settlers of the banks of the Nile may not have been the first to discover agriculture or fire pottery or make use of metals or discover any of the great breakthroughs in human history, but they were certainly among the first to adopt these innovations and to master the techniques and ideas that were already familiar to the Mesopotamian civilization hundreds of years before.

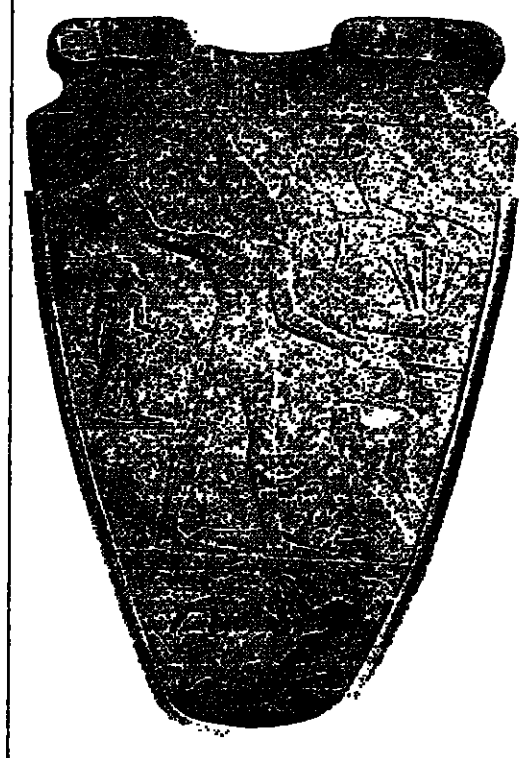
By the time of Menes, the founder of unified Egypt, irrigation, metallurgy, writing, wheeled vehicles and monumental buildings had all appeared in Mesopotamia. All in short order were fitted to Egyptian use by a dramatically rapid process of imitation and adaptation. The political unification of Egypt helped build a more durable and a more lasting civilization than in Mesopotamia which was almost politically divided.

For more than 3,000 years Ancient Egypt was able to match its neighbours' technological skills and to lead an independent and vibrant life. During these long years it lost its independence briefly to the Asiatics, known as the Hyksos, when it lagged behind in adopting the new warfare gear that these neighbours had mastered. It gained its independence when it adopted and perfected the use of that gear.

The final fall of Ancient Egypt came when it could not cope with the great military and technological innovations that came with the onset of the Iron Age. The entry into that age needed resources that Egypt did not have. Foremost among these was the wood which was needed in large amounts to fire the furnaces of this high-temperature industry.

It is claimed that it takes an enormous amount of wood (close to 80 fully-grown trees) to make one ton of iron. It would thus seem that the fall of Ancient Egypt was due, in large measure, to an energy crisis.

The writer is a US-based professor of geology and former chairman of the Egyptian Organisation for Geological Surveying. His most recent major work was entitled: The River Nile, Hydrology and Utilisation, published by Pergamon Press.



The palette of Menes, founder of unified Egypt. This artifact is probably from around 3000 BC





Belia, Abdel-Moeti (behind Belia) and Tofaha, Badr Hanada, the creator of the dolls, in her studio, with Abdel-Moeti and some of her handwork. Patchwork is now her new passion

## Dolls' stories

Playing with dolls is not a popular occupation among Egyptian children. Fayza Hassan tries to find out the reasons

Kimberly, a little American girl had a rag doll from the time she gurgled in her crib. By the time she was three, the doll had been submitted to so much use that one had to look long and hard to precisely define the object. Kimberly however, subliminally refused to exchange her favourite companion for a more sophisticated number, such as a Barbie doll, the choice of her parents. "She calls this sack of rags 'Blossom' and drags it everywhere. We call it the 'the dreadful dead' and have tried to lose it on many occasions to 'no avail', said the indulgent mother. Once on holidays, they purposefully left the dreadful dead at the hotel. On the way back home, Kimberly noticed her absence. "She sobbed so much that we had to turn around and drive thirty miles to retrieve the ugly thing." Dolls in Egypt are seldom the object of such faithful attachment. In a toy shop, Samia, the mother of a six-year-old boy, is buying him a gun which produces awful noises and a car, equipped with remote control. When asked why she does not buy a doll for her daughter she shrugs. "They are too expensive and useless. I would rather buy her a dress that she can wear." The fact that her little girl is already looking on hugging a little pillow does not give her a hint as to the child's real need.

This is not to say that all Egyptian girls are, as a rule, denied the pleasure of owning a doll. The point is, rather, that when they have one, it is usually imported, enforcing in the mind of the child a prototype not necessarily endemic to his culture. Moreover, an imported doll commands a price tag not necessarily affordable to the majority of families. This then begs a question: If the need exists, why are we not producing locally, dolls which could range from the very simple to the more sophisticated, to enter to every purse?

"When I was a little girl," says artist Badr Hanada, who makes hand-made rag dolls, "I had no dolls. My mother wanted me to study. On the rare occasions where I finished my homework early, I was sent to play outside with the other children. We played ball, hopscotch, or hide and seek but none of it had a doll."

Badr remembers her childhood as a time when something was missing in her life, something that would have been only hers, a silent companion in whose ears she could pour her secrets. "It was like an unfulfilled need," she says.

In the olden days, families had carvers who came to the house to tend to old mattresses or make new ones. With the left-over scraps of material and cotton

they always made small dolls for the little girls in the household, says Badr. By the time she was growing up however, her parents were buying ready-made rag dolls. "I tried to make my own dolls at one point, with whatever was available around the house, but whenever my mother caught me rolling bits of paper around my fingers, she used to slap me and send me to my room ordering me to concentrate on my homework. Badr thinks that this reinforced her intention of making dolls when she grew up. In a much more sophisticated way, her dolls are an improved professional version of the carvers' dolls that she missed in her childhood. For a long time she was involved with the marionettes at the National Marionettes Theatre but eventually she decided to dedicate her time to creating her own dolls. She now has a whole collection, sparingly reproduced in a small factory belonging to a member of her family. The most popular are Abdel-Moeti who comes in various disguises, as a *fellah*, a worker, a fisherman, and his wife Adelia, a "good" Egyptian housewife, complete with colorful *galabeya* and pompons on her head kerchief. Abdel-Moeti and Adelia have two children, both full of mischief. Tofaha and Belia, Veteran educator Florence Smith and illustrator Yasser

Gaissa have been so taken by the small family that they have written and illustrated short stories of their adventures. The family is a typical Egyptian one, with Abdel-Moeti (Abdu for short) playing the role of breadwinner and father. "Abdu is going fishing today. He decides to take Belia with him. Belia is very happy to go with his father. It is a big treat. He feels grown-up when his father asks him to help." Adelia, the mother, is busy as she may be, but finds time to help a neighbour in distress assisting in the birth of Karim and worrying because in all the usual commotion she has forgotten to bring the new baby a present. Tofaha often gets into trouble trying to emulate her mother. As for Belia, like every other Egyptian boy, he wants to become a famous footballer.

Apart from Abdel-Moeti's family of four, Badr has produced a mustache-stern policeman and his fat wife, as well as a plethora of other hand-made, inexpensive smaller rag dolls and a great number of cuddly animals and hand-puppets specially made to fire the imagination of any child.

Oddly enough however, it is mainly adults who delight in the dolls and their stories. Few children have even heard of Abdel-Moeti and co. except maybe through a teacher at school.

The suggestion that the absence of dolls in the Egyptian child's traditions goes back to religious reasons and to the fact that in Ancient Egypt they were considered objects of worship and therefore forbidden as play things, brings forth a smile on Badr's lips. "Wouldn't this apply equally to Barbie?" she asks. The fact is, that a large number of little girls are quite happy to play with expensive, sophisticated, adult-looking Barbies. Cindies, or whatever other imitation is put on the market. One is left to wonder if this is the result of a marketing campaign cleverly directed to target children, a reflection of parental status and ambitions, or the natural inclination of children to want to copy their peers. Whatever the reason, while many little girls are growing up without knowing the pleasure of hugging a "dreadful dead" bundle of rags, a red-cheeked Tofaha, or a busy Adelia, others have to content themselves with taking to bed a cold plastic object in the shape of a movie star whom they hardly could be expected to have tender motherly feelings for. As for Abdel-Moeti, he will keep on winning prizes for foreign toy and folkloric festivals, contemplating pensively a world where there is no place for him except on a shelf.



## Against all odds

For the past decade the *Thamama* (Tama) has been a national nightmare as poignantly disturbing to the post-revolutionary at large, as the lack of housing facilities and employment. Families sacrifice so much to prepare their children for the exam, when the candidate finally takes the dreaded exam, he/she carries the responsibility not only of his/her future, but that of his/her parents' sanity. As things stand now, it is not the students' knowledge that is being questioned, but rather the capacity of the parents to invest money and time — in their child's schooling, which, for all intents and purposes, has left the classroom to take place in various homes, under the more or less qualified attention of private tutors and worried parents. But since we have no time to spare, quite some time now that free education is free of charge, coming with a hefty price tag, that of private lessons, building wonders if parents should not spend their money building schools and paying for teachers to do their job where it is meant to be done. Egyptian parents with children of ten, overwhelmingly spend the clearest part of their time and income, organising alternative classrooms in the form of home schooling. There are mini classrooms in the form of home in the afternoon, where children, excluded from doing nothing all morning in overworked schools, attempt to cram under the direction of overworked teachers, whose main concern is often to just get them through exams. What do the children themselves think? I usually they don't, or can't say, because this question is not included in the exam subjects that they are required to learn by rote.

Pushed and pulled, urged on, transported directly from one private lesson to another, harassed even in their sleep, from a tender age these children are requested to stifle their natural curiosity, their love of fun, their talents and inclination in order to acquire the coveted final certificate which will allow them entrance in a desirable faculty, where more of the same will be inflicted on them. At the end of this "educational process", having had their personality thoroughly destroyed, together with their capacity to learn from experience, draw conclusions and exercise their judgement where needed, they are suddenly asked to show initiative and good judgement on the conduct of their affairs. Some parents however, secretly conscious of having been active accomplices in raising mentally impaired children, continue their "labour of love", choosing partners for them, furnishing their houses, looking after their upbringing and generally ensuring that the system is perpetuated. Few rebel, and it is therefore no surprise that even fewer are willing to act in order to change the way knowledge is imparted to the younger generations. "It is terrible," moan the parents, "we have chosen the best schools, we pay an eye and a tooth, and have hired private tutors for every subject, what else can we do?" Some enterprising parents, ignoring the school completely, try to secure for their own child the "best" tutor there is, if possible at all, a foreign school, while others lock themselves up with their future candidate to the coveted *Thamama*, repeating ad nauseam "go to your room and study." Amazingly, some children comply.

In a different scenario parents of one class, in one school, could maybe get together and say "no". No to private lessons to start with. What would happen then, one wonders. Would the children of a whole class be failed indiscriminately? And, if this is the case, for how many years in a row? Would other classes follow? Could concerted action be organised in just one school? And then another, and another... Could parents — since they seem so involved in the educational process — bring pressure on the educational authorities forcing them to start seriously contemplating an overhaul of this bankrupt system, maybe channelling somehow, some of the private lessons' fees into the teachers' regular salary?

Years ago, in another country, in a rather poor community, a little girl returned home from her first day in kindergarten, declaring that she was never going to go back. "This is not a school," she said contentedly. "They have no books and the children can't read." The mother, concerned for her child's future, went to see the teacher, a pert young person, with a clear vision of her duties. "They are not allowed to read before they are six," was her curt answer. She did not know why, or who had set the limit. She just followed the rules, she explained, which, as far as she was concerned, were much more important than her charges' individual needs.

The mother, unconvinced, met with other parents. Soon the story got out, taking on the proportion of a campaign. A committee was formed and the kindergarten administration approached with a scheme, allowing a group of parents to put together a small library, headed by a volunteer mother, who would read stories to those who could not do it themselves. At first the request was met with great reluctance, but when the parents, threatened to withdraw their children, the headmistress finally agreed. A weekly roster was organised by the mothers who took turns in buying and reading books. The happy conclusion is not that all the schools administrators in the land woke up and listened, introducing story-time at kindergarten level, but that a small number of children, somewhere, sometime, were taught the need to differ on occasions — and the pleasure of reading — and that maybe this has had a beneficial impact on the way they proceeded with their lives.

Fayza Hassan



Sufra Dayna

## Sufra Dayna

**Sfeeha dough**  
Ingredients:  
6 cups all purpose flour  
2 cartons yoghurt (room temperature)  
1 1/2 cup corn oil  
4 tsp. yeast granules  
1 tsp. salt  
Water (if needed for the dough)

**Method**  
Dissolve the yeast in half a cup of warm water and set aside. Sieve the flour and mix well with the salt, then make a large hole in the middle of it. Mix the yoghurt with the dissolved yeast and the oil, then pour them into the hole. Bring forth the flour to the middle gradually until you totally moisten the whole quantity. Mix with the tips of your finger (add warm water if needed), then knead the dough well, plying it over whilst kneading for 20 minutes. At its final stage, the dough should not be sticky. Brush the top of the dough with oil, place it in a large bowl and cover with a towel. Leave it aside in a warm place until the quantity is doubled. Knead it again for a couple of minutes then divide it into small balls the size of a large egg. Cover the balls with a piece of cloth lest they dry. The *sfeeha* has a filling made with minced meat which will be our next week's recipe.

Moushira Abdel-Malek

## Restaurant review

## How far Florence?

Antipasti on the patio. Nigel Ryan partakes

Gingham table cloths, pan-tile roofs, wooden benches and an Italian menu. Well, the pan-tile roofs are actually no more than a mock up, a kind back-lot studio setting, a four deep, jutting above the doors and windows of Da Mario. The tables outside occupy less a piazza than a patio, for this is the Nile Hilton.

Last week I was happily finishing a delicious fish soup in one of my favourite restaurants in Agouza when the person I was dining with asked me if I had ever tried the crab soup at Da Mario. I had not, and made a mental note to do so in the future, not least because the person making the recommendation hailed from Brittany, and so, one might assume, knows a thing or two about crabs. And guess what? A few days later I was sitting at one of the gingham table cloths covering a wooden table, enjoying the view from the patio, perusing the menu and deciding, against the recommendation of the gentleman from Brittany, that since this was 2pm and a hot July day I would forego the seafood soup, opting instead for a journey to the antipasti buffet, a service myself selection that, on examination, appeared surprisingly extensive. So too my luncheon companion, only in addition to the antipasti he also wanted a pizza. He is American, a nation where pizza is taken seriously.

Cross the patio, enter the restaurant proper beneath the pan-tiled projection, and before you is the buffet, a circular table weighed down with a seemingly infinite variety of things. One would need a very large plate to

try everything. The plates provided, though, are of middling proportions, and so it is very much a question of having lots of little bits.

I had little bits of shrimp, of shredded beef mixed with onion and peppers, of an oyster mushroom salad, a salad comprising slices of what I assume was lamb drenched in a beige sauce the components of which I could not, for the life of me, identify. There were also undressed ingredients, slices of tomato, cucumber, shredded lettuce etc, which offered a welcome respite from the more elaborate components of the buffet. And then I spied a pot of gazpacho, with bowls, and for good measure had a little of that as well. So back to the table, companion and I, plates and bowls balanced precariously.

Of course, the problem with so many ingredients, and such a middling sized plate is that everything merges together, shrimps with beef, lemon with oyster mushrooms, calamari with lamb. Odd juxtapositions as a surreal cuisine emerges.

Americans are pizza snobs, though what there is to be snobbish about with a pizza is beyond my ken. Yet for so many Americans the pizza is a kind of civilizational plimsoll line.

Da Mario is far from Florence. But the gardens of the Nile Hilton provide a pleasant enough outlook. Lunch, for two, including one lemon juice and a bottle of mineral water, came to LE80. And I didn't have the crab soup after all.

Da Mario, Nile Hilton Hotel, Tahrir Square.

## Those long summer months

With more and more working mothers, the need for nursery schools has increased. Amansy Abdel-Moneim visits a nursery which also provides child care in the summer.

Changing economic conditions in the early 80's created a need for both parents to hold full-time jobs. Most families resorted to hiring nannies. However, after a while many parents found that a nanny was not enough, especially for a pre-school child who needs special facilities, a qualified teacher and an organised curriculum in order to prepare him adequately, smoothing the path which leads to school. Moreover, the pre-school phase of a child's life has recently been the subject of much attention as it marks the first separation from his mother.

Marian who claims to own the first foreign nursery in Cairo, believes that children absorb a lot of information in the years before they start school and experience many things which can form a basis for their education. "Our aim is to help them coordinate and use these experiences so that they gain a conceptual understanding," says Marian.

"Going to school for the first time can be a process as difficult as weaning," says Hala who teaches at a language school in Helwan. "Not surprisingly, children who have already taken their first step away from home by attending pre-schools, find it easier to adapt to the new environment of real school," Hala adds. "Children who are enrolled in pre-school nurseries usually grow up to be more confident, independent, helpful and sociable which eventually helps them become contributors to society," adds Mona a nursery school teacher.

"In the early '80's many families with young children started to feel the need for new facilities," recalls Marian. It was then, in 1982, that she started her project with five French-speaking children in the English section. "Over a period of time we set up the

French department then as the demand for a German department grew, we expanded again."

Currently the nursery has 20 multi-national children, who interact, play and learn together, says Marian. "This is the age where children like to imitate, so they can gain new habits and get acquainted with other cultures," she adds. In her school, children are subdivided into groups according to their age.

"Our method is based on the idea of learning through play," she explains, adding that the programme is specially designed to cover a wide range of activities. "I always aim for children who are enrolled in our school to have a very good command of a foreign language whether it be French, English or German," says Marian. Accordingly all teachers are highly qualified.

Children learn art, handicrafts as well as being introduced to science and mathematics. They go on trips, have birthday parties, celebrate Mother's Day, play all the games they can dream of and then wash and change their clothes before returning home.

"We started summer school courses ten years ago to occupy the children during their lengthy summer vacation," she says. Most of the children enrolled in summer school have been pre-schoolers here. "Our summer programme has become a sort of yearly reunion," says Marian. Each week of the summer course includes a four-day outdoor activity programme to visit famous places in Cairo and a one-day indoor activity programme. Indoor activities include sports, arts and crafts and a number of games.

During the outdoor trips the children are only permitted to speak the language they were enrolled in. "In most schools there is a lot of work to do all through the year and children prepare for their exams months ahead. This leaves them with very little time to master the language," explains Marian. Therefore a lot of Egyptian children are going to summer school to improve their foreign language.

## Al-Ahram Weekly

## Crossword

By Samia Abdennour

### ACROSS

1. Slightly open (4)
5. Rear appendage (4)
9. Cripples (5)
14. Hub of wheel (4)
15. Prep. of direction (4)
16. Happening (5)
17. Calamity (7)
19. Dry fruit of pine (4)
21. Three-toed sloth (2)
22. Part of auxiliary verb (3)
23. ID is one (4)
24. Electrical unit, abb. (4)
25. Unit of magnetic induction (5)
28. Cease (4)
29. Dutch knife (4)
30. Musical instrument (4)
31. Comb. form for "far" (4)
32. Bull's eye, pl. (5)
33. The Sun (3)
34. Word-of-mouth (4)
35. Curl up (4)
36. Cracked (7)
38. Incapable of crying. 2 wds (7)

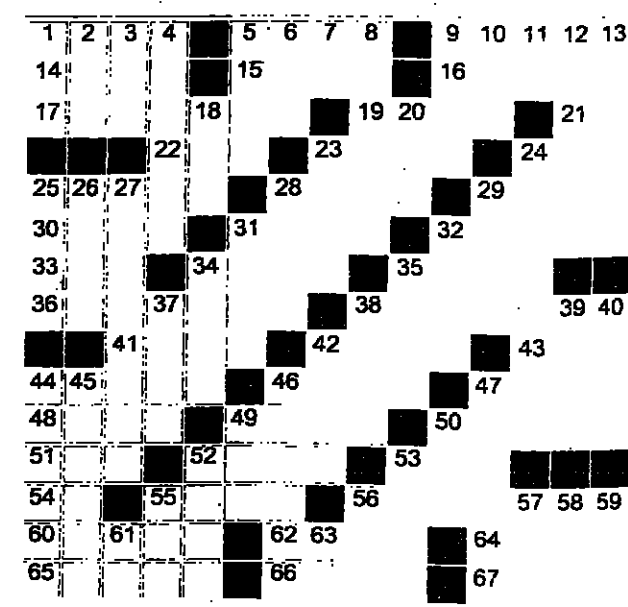
DOWN

1. Pismire (3)
2. Discard (3)
3. Miss Gardner (3)
4. Hold a reception for (6)
5. Assist to get over difficulty (4)
6. Indefinite number (3)
7. Personal pronoun (2)
8. Neighbourhood (6)
9. Advance (4)
10. Hall! (3)
11. Where Egypt, Turkey, Tunis are abb. (2)

### 41. Debauchee (4)

42. Hints (4)
43. Health resort (3)
44. Facial features (5)
46. Corrosion (4)
47. Equal in rank (4)
48. Sing the praises of (4)
49. Dissolve (4)
50. Possession (5)
51. A limb (3)
52. Covenant (4)
53. Item (3)
54. Ego (2)
55. Second brightest star in constellation (4)
56. Proportional (7)
60. Summer fruit (5)
62. Mispronounce (4)
65. Spanish painter (4)
66. Net for ladies' hair (5)
67. Of smaller quantity (4)
67. Ancient British and Irish alphabet of 20 characters (4)

12. Type of glaze (6)
13. Stalks or stems of fungi (6)
18. Time period (3)
20. Crumbs (3)
23. Convoke (4)
24. Examines critically (8)
25. Be restless (4)
26. Poetic for black (4)
27. Sun-parlour (8)
28. Brainpan (4)
29. Smarter (4)
31. ... of life (4)
32. Musical: ... and Dolls (4)
34. Composition (4)
35. Lose sleep over (4)
37. Water hole (4)
38. Powdery dirt (4)
39. Dueling sword (4)



40. Let fly (4)
42. System of religious worship (4)
44. Alleges (6)
45. Set (6)
46. Look back on (6)
47. Comb. form for "false" (6)
49. Gymnasium equipment (3)
50. Also (3)
52. Be undecided (4)
53. Expression of surprise (4)
55. Expression of contempt (3)
56. Manuscripts, abb. (3)
57. Loiter (3)
58. After the manner of, 2 wds (3)
59. Edge (3)
61. Behold! (2)
63. That is, L. abb. (2)

سكول من زلازل



# Al-Ahram: A Diwan of contemporary life

On 5 October, 1891, *Al-Ahram's* correspondent in Tanta announced the capture of one of the most notorious leaders of the Orabi Revolution, Abdallah El-Nadim. He had been on the run for more than nine years.

Earlier that year Fidi Pasha, the provincial director of El-Gharbiya, had received information to the effect that two strangers had appeared in El-Gamiza, a small village in the province. He instructed Farid Effendi, the deputy police commissioner to go to the village to discover the identity of these strangers. After discovering that it was Abdallah El-Nadim and his aide, the police mounted a posse of infantry soldiers and cavalry to flush the fugitive out. *Al-Ahram* reports: "The soldiers surrounded the village from all sides. One soldier was stationed on a nearby hill in order to watch whether anyone attempted to escape over the rooftops. When the soldier spotted someone trying to hide behind the kindling stacked up on top of one of the houses, Farid Effendi and his aides moved in to apprehend him. Before Abdallah El-Nadim could escape to another rooftop, Farid caught him. When asked his identity, El-Nadim responded, 'You would not have come here if you did not know who I was.' 'I only asked to ascertain,' said Farid. 'I am Abdallah El-Nadim.'

The police then set out in search of El-Nadim's companion who they found hiding in one of the village huts. He was arrested and both captives were taken to the district police station where they were put in separate cells.

Eight days after he was arrested, the khedive issued a supreme edict ordering that El-Nadim be banished to Syria. While his companion was released, El-Nadim was taken by train to Alexandria. Two days later, on 15 October, he boarded the ship that was to carry him to Syria where, according to *Al-Ahram*, "he was permitted to designate his preferred port of destination and, upon arrival, he will be given fifty pounds to assist him in meeting his costs of living."

In *Al-Ahram's* opinion, the khedive had been very generous to El-Nadim. "Thus the affairs conducted by kings and princes. This is the dream of great men. To one who graces every noble rank and station, we dedicate our praises and send up our prayers that night and day may unite to protect and preserve you and your descendants."

As the spokesman for the Orabi Revolution and a former journalist, El-Nadim was indeed fortunate. Had he been arrested when the revolution was put down, he would have met with a more dire fate. However, nine years later, the spirit of vengeance had faded and there was no need to open old wounds. Hence a more tolerant solution: exile to Syria where he "faded in Jaffa to begin a new life."

Hardly a month passed since El-Nadim landed in Jaffa, when it was reported in *Al-Ahram* that he had opened a school there. It disturbed El-Nadim that

this information was published, because it gave the impression that he was content to settle in exile. He wrote to the newspaper, "I have no desire to engage in gainful employment during the period of exile from my homeland, aware as I am that I am at the mercy of the grace and generosity of His Royal Highness, the Khedive. I dare not venture out of reach of his compassion, for I have not despaired of receiving his munificent clemency."

In his anguish, El-Nadim makes a passionate appeal for the reader's sympathy. The suggestion is that he had already suffered enough while he was a fugitive in Egypt. He had counted individually each of the 3,327 days he had spent in hiding. "Without living in dread of what adversities and exigencies the next hour might bring."

Now in Syria, however, he seems to have found solace in fanciful optimism. "In the decision to send me to the Holy Land is the wisdom of a physician and a favour granted by a generous soul. The change of air will allow me to recover my health, and now that I have emerged from the ordeals of hiding to the luxury of exposure, I will be able to consult physicians who, will hopefully treat the many ills with which I am afflicted."

One begins to sense that El-Nadim is under the impression that he is on a brief sick leave in Jaffa. He certainly wasted little time in establishing connections there. He writes of a visit to Al-Sayyid Ali Effendi Abu Al-Mawahib, the Mufti of Jaffa, who "welcomed me into his home with great honour and treated me as a brother. There he introduced me to local scholars, leaders and dignitaries of every creed, with whom I later exchanged visits." He also frequented a private home "in which every night there would be a large distinguished gathering of eminent personalities who would exchange views on every matter." No evening would end, he adds, before all the guests "bid their praises to His Royal Highness the Khedive." There is no mistaking the final plea contained in this conclusion to his letter, which, as though to underscore it, he signed "Abdallah El-Nadim, the Alexandrian in Jaffa."

Less than two months after this letter was written, Khedive Tawfiq died. Rather than despair, it was as though divine will had intervened to realise the aspirations of the man in exile. Tawfiq's successor, Abbas II, who, young, spirited and with nationalist sympathies, tried to reverse many of the policies initiated by his father. Not least affected were the Orabi partisans-in-exile, among whom, of course, was El-Nadim.

On 4 February, 1892, *Al-Ahram*, to the surprise of its readers, published the text of a supreme edict that was presented to the Ministry of Interior. The edict, marking the turning point in the palace's policy toward El-Nadim, read as follows: "In view of our disposition to compassion and mercy, it is our will to waive the remaining period of exile upon the five in-

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As Abdallah El-Nadim discovered after his capture, being a fugitive at least affords one the chance to remain in his homeland. For El-Nadim, writes Dr Yunan Labib Rizq, exile brought with it an alienation that the journalist and political activist was unable to shake until his death



Illustration: Makram Henalin

dividuals listed below who had been so sentenced due to their involvement in the Orabi Revolution.

Of these five, Jamikhan Ghuri and Ali Qabujan were unknown. The other three, however, were prominent leaders of the revolution: Hassan Musa El-Aqqad, sentenced to 20 years exile in Massawa; Mohamed Ebeid, an army officer who had been discharged and sentenced to exile for life; and Abdallah El-Nadim who had been sentenced to exile abroad.

It is interesting that these individuals cited in the supreme edict are remarkably different. El-Aqqad was a wealthy merchant who, in the wake of the suppression of the Orabi Revolution and the British occupation, fled to Crete. The forces of the Khedive, however, were able to apprehend him, bring him back to Egypt, and banish him. There is no record of his being involved in any anti-government activity during his term of exile. Ebeid had led an armed force that thwarted the notorious Circassian plot in Qasr El-Nil. He fled after the Orabi Revolution and his whereabouts had not been discovered until the time he was pardoned. Last but not least, was El-Nadim, an orator and journalist, who did not have the good fortune to be banished to an earthly paradise such as Ceylon.

At the same time, they had certain points in common. First, they had all been exiled or banished by supreme edict. Since they had not been tried by a court of law, their sentences were all the easier to reverse. All that was needed was another edict. That edict was forthcoming, because all three were very popular national figures. El-Aqqad had spent a considerable personal fortune in supporting the revolution. Ebeid was associated with his valor and bravery in battle and El-Nadim, as one of the major symbols of the revolution, represented the ardor of the nationalist spirit. Such popularity Abbas II and his advisors would certainly want to rally to their side. Indeed, it was turned to their favour in their bid to oust many Tawfiq appointees who still retained considerable influence, and to gain

leverage against the British high commissioner who could voice no strong objections to this edict given the spirit in which it was promulgated.

"In the supreme edict, issued on 2 February 1892, was only implemented three months later. It was not until 9 May that the ship carrying El-Nadim entered the port of Alexandria. The reasons for the delay remain unknown. The decree may have been obstructed by Ottoman authorities in Syria, bureaucratic complications in Egypt or the meddling of the British occupation authorities. Anyhow, no sooner had he returned to his cherished homeland than El-Nadim seemed to do everything in his power to get himself banished again."

On the morning of 27 August, 1892, *Al-Ahram's* readers must have been taken aback when they opened their papers to read an advertisement for a new magazine. "*Al-Ustaz* is a scientific educational journal owned by Abdel-Fattah El-Nadim and jointly edited by his brother, the eloquent writer Abdallah El-Nadim. No further description is necessary other than they are both two of the best writers in the country in this age." Readers must have raised their eyebrows further when they read the newspaper's enthusiastic praise for the magazine's pilot edition. "The journal, eloquently introduced and elegantly presented by these two fine authors, contains a wealth of enticing material. No subject is too great for their fluent and articulate pens and we have no doubt that this nationalist Egyptian magazine will hold great appeal to the Egyptian public, who will rush to subscribe to this font of information on every art and discipline."

The reason why *Al-Ahram's* readers should evince such surprise dates back to an old antagonism between the owners of *Al-Ahram* and El-Nadim, at the time of the Orabi revolution. During this period, El-Nadim, as editor-in-chief of a rival, pro-Orabi newspaper, *Al-Muqbil*, launched a violent campaign against *Al-Ahram*, forcing its owners to close down their newspaper and flee to Syria, only to return to Egypt at the invitation of the Khedive Tawfiq after

the British occupation.

Evidently, 10 years was sufficient time to mend old wounds and for the enemies of yesterday to become the friends of today. After all, they were now united by common interests. The new magazine would align itself with the anti-British camp, championed by the young Khedive. This too was *Al-Ahram's* platform.

El-Nadim offered his token of friendship to the owners of *Al-Ahram* in his first edition of *Al-Ustaz*, where he dedicated more than a page for an obituary in memory of Salim Taqia who had died two weeks prior and whom he described as "that virtuous founder and eloquent writer who spent his life in the service of the East and its people."

At first, El-Nadim seemed to pledge not to involve himself in politics. "Politics only gives one headaches and confounds the mind. It has enough people to worry about it, and we are a group of people who prefer jokes, treats, fun and snacks!" The sarcasm is implicit in the colloquial idiom in which it was written, and it would not be long before El-Nadim broke his pledge by once again becoming politically active.

He launched his first campaign in defence of the dynasty of Mohamed Ali, then the subject of aspersions in the pro-British press by way of an indirect attack on the current occupant of the throne, the anti-British khedive, Abbas II. On 27 February, 1893 *Al-Ustaz* featured an article entitled "Our condition yesterday and today, or the result of the efforts of Mohamed Ali and his descendants." The article accused "some audacious newspapers of attempting to delude people into thinking that many good works and reforms have been the product of non-Egyptians. Yet, Cairo is proud to boast that it is one of the monuments which testifies to the greatness of Mohamed Ali's dynasty, whose many deeds we hereby list one by one."

While El-Nadim's article must certainly have been heartily welcomed in Abdin Palace, it was undoubtedly greeted with consternation in Dubara Palace, the residence of the British high commissioner, who was to shortly demonstrate his displeasure with it.

In the meantime, however, El-Nadim got himself into deeper trouble. He devoted the entire 23 May edition of *Al-Ustaz* to an attack on the British mouthpiece, *Al-Moghatam*. "May God cast my words into a poison with no antidote, and onto a scorching branding iron," it begins. He then assails the owners of *Al-Moghatam* with a broadside of invective: "They are the enemies of the supreme sultan in their persistence in denigrating the acts of the government of the Sublime Porte and accusing it of ignorance, tyranny and aggression. They are the enemies of His Royal Highness the Khedive, in their designs to alienate him from his people and to promote the recognition of a foreign power."

For the occupation authorities, that was the last straw. Yielding to pressures from the British high commissioner, the Egyptian government, as "confidential sources"

told *Al-Ahram*, "decided to close down the offices of *Al-Ustaz* and ordered its owner to leave the country and never to write about it again. In return, he will receive a compensation of 400 pounds and a monthly salary of 25 pounds wherever he chooses to reside."

"There are political machinations afoot here," commented *Al-Ahram* about this decree. "For were the owner of *Al-Ustaz* a dangerous revolutionary provocateur as the British allege, then his banishment should have been meted out with a calumny and disgrace, not honour and reward." Of course, *Al-Ahram's* astonishment was affected. It was perfectly aware of the true motive behind the kid-glove treatment of this influential writer. "Indeed, this banishment is a tribute, not an indignation," concluded the newspaper.

On 26 June, 1893, El-Nadim resumed his exile in Jaffa. Before leaving Alexandria, he had one request to make. Through the auspices of *Al-Ahram*, "he begs all his friends not to seek to correspond with him over political matters, for he will only answer those letters of purely social and amicable content."

Three months later, Alexandria bore witness to the most tragic episode in the life of the fugitive. On 31 August, a ship carrying El-Nadim arrived in the port. As soon as he landed, he made his way directly to the governor's office. "To appeal for the clemency of the khedive to allow him to remain in Egypt as the sultan issued an decree forbidding him to reside in any of the Ottoman lands."

Over the next four days, the Egyptian government pursued numerous contacts with the British authorities and with Mukhtar Pasha, the Ottoman commissioner in Cairo on behalf of El-Nadim. The British remained adamant that El-Nadim remain exiled while Mukhtar Pasha, on the other hand, managed to convince Istanbul to grant El-Nadim entry into Turkey. Throughout this period, El-Nadim had eagerly awaited the pardon that would allow him back into his cherished homeland. But, with Egypt barred to him, and the route to Istanbul open, his hopes were not to be realised. On 4 November, El-Nadim boarded the first ship bound for Istanbul. One imagines him on deck, watching the city in which he had spent most of life fade into the horizon.

Over the next three years, under the vigilant eye of Sultan Abdel-Hamid II, El-Nadim worked as the inspector of Arab publications. His sole solace during exile, one learns, was his friendship with Sheikh Gamal Al-Din Al-Afghani. But, no cage, however gilded, can accommodate a spirit as free as El-Nadim's. On 13 October, 1896, he died, alone and lost in his land of exile.

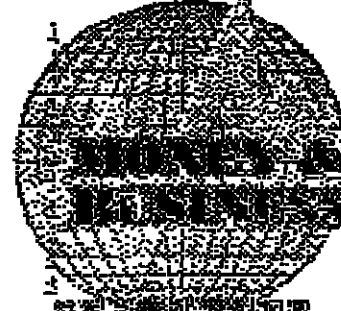
The author is a professor of history and head of Al-Ahram History Studies Centre.



## Alexandria Stock Exchange transactions grow

ABDEL-SATTAR El-Bakri, head of the Alexandria Stock Exchange, stated that the value of the exchange's transactions during the first half of the current year reached LE61.7mn, a growth of 31.7 per cent over the same period last year. El-Bakri said that the number of stocks in circulation increased by 1.2 million shares, attaining a growth of 63.7 per cent. Market transactions were distributed among LE61.5mn for shares traded in Egyptian pounds, while US dollar shares reached LE59,000.

## MONEY & BUSINESS



## Increasing Egyptian labour

WITH THE aim of increasing employment, Ahmed El-Amawi, minister of labour, stated that 42,000 work contracts have been examined and approved by the ministry's offices during the first three months of this year.

Likewise, Ahmed Khalafallah, under-secretary to the minister, said that 13,601 work permits have been issued to Egyptians working in Saudi Arabia, while 912,000 work permits have been issued to Egyptians working in other Arab countries.

## Faisal Islamic Bank of Egypt Financial Statement for the end of 1416AH

Achieved Results (in LE millions)	1416AH 18 May 1996	1415AH 29 May 1995	Growth rate
Total balance sheet	6424	6226.5	3.2%
Deposits (Current and Investment Accounts)	5074.7	4933.3	2.9%
Deployment & Investment Balances	5825.1	5665.4	2.8%
Internal Resources	570.4	508	12.3%
Net profits	287.2	245.9	16.8%

The value of profits distributed to the owners of investment accounts during the year 1416AH (May 1995/May 1996) totalled LE275mn, in comparison with LE245.9mn. during the previous year (1415AH).

The number of companies established by the bank in which it holds shares reached 38 companies as of 18 May 1996, with total capital amounting to LE1121mn. The bank's share amounts to LE196mn.

## NBE: A spur to real estate development with the Aracadia project

IN LINE with its strategy geared towards universal banking and penetrating non-traditional fields, the National Bank of Egypt (NBE) has tailored a balanced investment and financing policy that squares with the emerging economic and banking variables.

As a major player in real estate development, NBE finances a host of real estate projects and participated in the capital of 6 real estate projects amounting to some LE407.5mn. Moreover, the bank is co-establishing with the New Communities Authority an integrated mall in El-Shorouk City

to give impetus to the volume of demand in the Egyptian market.

Furthermore, the bank has participated in establishing El-Ahly Co for Real Estate Development which started its achievements with the Aracadia project. The said project is designed to be a comprehensive housing, social and entertainment centre, located on Corniche El-Nil Street at El-Ramla. The project will overlook the River Nile and Zamalek, covering an area of 9,000m<sup>2</sup>, including 60 housing units, 500 commercial units, a parking garage, 4 cinemas and other entertainment activities such as bowling,

billiards, skiing, open-air restaurants facing the Nile, a gymnasium and a swimming pool.

The US\$100mn project is to be designed and managed by specialised firms with an expertise acknowledged worldwide.

Accordingly, the project is envisaged to be completed in the span of 5 years (from 24 September 1995 to 24 November 1999) where the design and the foundation of the company would take place in the first year, to be followed by the project's implementation, marketing and sale of its different units during the following years.

## Faisal Islamic Bank of Egypt: A leading role in economic development

EGYPT is taking an active part in boosting economic growth by financing and providing expertise to numerous economic activities in such areas as production, exporting and construction, in order to meet the needs of society.

Abdel-Hamid Abu Moussa, governor of the bank, said that the bank uses its resources to establish companies and projects covering all areas of economic activity. The bank currently holds shares in 38 companies having a total capital of LE1074mn, with the bank's share being LE191mn. However, said Abu Moussa, the bank's role does not end with the mere establishment of companies or providing them with capital, rather, the bank provides these services in correspondence with the principles of Islamic law.

Because of this, the bank enjoys a high reputation worldwide for the quality of its services. Most of the bank's companies offer their services within the local market, while others have their activities directed towards Arab markets. A few companies aim their activities towards European markets. All of these companies play a role in increasing national development, boosting exports and providing thousands of job opportunities.

Among the major companies belonging

to Faisal Islamic Bank of Egypt:

The Islamic Company for Tool Production (FarCo)

The Islamic Company for Engineering Industries (FidCo)

Misr International Hospital

The Islamic Company for Packing Materials (EcoPak)

The Islamic Company for Foreign Trade

The International Company for Import and Export

The National Ismailiya Company for Foodstuffs Production (FoodCo)

In response to the housing crisis facing the country, the bank's officials recognise the importance of boosting the real estate market. In this field, Abu Moussa says that the bank takes an active role by channeling a major portion of its investment funds. In line with this role, the bank recently established the Faisal Bank Real Estate Investment Co, with a capital of LE100mn. The company aims to establish a number of real estate projects and purchase land for resale, and is expected to occupy an important place within the field of real estate.



Abdel-Hamid Abu Moussa

## Egyptian-Japanese joint projects

TO ATTRACT a large portion of investments and to increase exports, the Egyptian Businessmen's Association (EBA) will hold an expanded meeting next Thursday with Japanese investors to find means of boosting Japanese investments in Egypt.

Hussein El-Shafie, head of the customs committee at the EBA, explained that the meeting will deal with a number of joint projects with Japanese investors.

Paving the road for these investments is of utmost importance. This includes ways of overcoming bureaucracy and determining the activities that suit Japanese investors in Egypt in order to avoid losses, and to guarantee prosperity.

El-Shafie added that feasibility studies were submitted for some of these projects which will benefit from Japanese expertise.

## Karate expert visits Greece

MR HIDEKI Okamoto (8 dan black belt), the most renowned karate expert in the Middle East and Africa, visited Greece to observe the training programme for its national team at the Summer Karate Camp 1996.

The training programme took place from 27 June to 1 July.

Mr Okamoto said that the Greek Summer Karate Competition 1996 witnessed the participation of 20 countries.



## Prince Charles heads St Catherine association

An association has been established to restore Saint Catherine's Monastery and conserve its treasures. **Rehab Saad reports**

In a bid to preserve the priceless icons and manuscripts housed in Sinai's Saint Catherine's Monastery, a new association has been established through a joint effort by Egypt and the United Kingdom. At a recent celebration in London for the inauguration of the association, hosted by Prince Charles and attended by various British and Egyptian dignitaries, the prince, who also heads the new association, stated that the funds raised by the new institution will be earmarked for helping to preserve the treasures of the monastery.

Elaborating on the logistics, Abdel-Halim Nouredin, the secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) and a member of the association's board, told the *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the members of the new institution will meet separately in London to discuss matters related to restoring the monastery and preserving its artefacts. A second meeting, held by the SCA in Egypt, will be held to lay down the groundswork and guidelines for the restoration efforts. "Then, we shall hold a joint

meeting in November between members of the association and the SCA to agree on the final blueprint," he stated.

Over the next five months, the SCA will draw up a working plan and visit the monastery to assess what needs to be done. "This is not the first time that it is being restored," said Nouredin. "In the 1980s, what was then known as the Egyptian Antiquities Organisation, restored the church as well as the mosque."

As part of the inauguration ceremony for the new association, a photo exhibition on the monastery, entitled, "The past, the present and the future" was held. In addition, during his speech, the bishop of the Sinai thanked Prince Charles for his role in the association, stating that "since the time of the rulers of Byzantium, through the era of Napoleon, Christian countries have contributed to the wealth of the monastery." He also noted that the treasures have been well preserved primarily because of the favourable weather conditions in Sinai and the care exerted by the monks themselves.

### Travellers' book guide

## Mount Sinai fully exposed

From biblical narratives filled with images of storm and light, to an update on roads, floods, the monks of Saint Catherine and the Jabaliya Bedouins, this delightful new publication quickly draws in readers

*Mount Sinai* by Joseph J. Hobbs is as comprehensive and fascinating a study of the high mountains of southern Sinai as has ever been written. It covers anthropology, geography, history, botany, religion, environmental protection and tourism. In the words of Colbert C. Held of Baylor University in the U.S., the book "succeeds effortlessly in combining all [these] subjects into a neat package." This 300-odd page publication is packed with information and Hobbs includes technical and scientific data within descriptive passages. He views Mount Sinai from the perspectives of the centuries-long inhabitants of the region: the monks of the Monastery of Saint Catherine, the Jabaliya Bedouins who live in the area, the government, anxious to develop the area, and the environmentalists who seek to protect it. His book raises troubling questions about the fate of Mount Sinai.

No adventurer or nature-loving traveller can read the pages of Hobbs' *Mount Sinai* without lasting after a journey to the southern part of the peninsula. Embellished with illustrations of the Exodus, folklore and descriptions of animal and plant life, not to mention the history of the monastery — and much about the Jabaliya Bedouins — this book is also a guide to all the Christian and Muslim sacred sites around the mountain.

On weather, Hobbs quotes the local Bedouin who talk about the four seasons of a day "from spring at dawn through the summer of midday, the autumn of dusk, and winter at night."

On plant life: "The high mountain ecosystem is a refuge for 27 of Sinai's endemic plant species, which are found nowhere else in the world." On animal life: "Pilgrims and travellers' accounts written prior to the spread of firearms in the nineteenth century depict a wealth of animals that delighted some visitors and frightened others" and Hobbs mourns the fact that some species have been hunted to virtual extinction.

As for the Monastery of Saint Catherine, its history is covered in depth. It was once a mecca for monks, a thriving cosmopolitan place where Greek, Syrian, Armenian, Coptic, and Latin monks of the cloth found refuge — as many as 2,000 inhabited the monastery during the fourth to sixth centuries — and also a place of pilgrimage. Its library collection of more than 5,000 volumes was second only to the Vatican's.

Today, only a handful of Greek Orthodox monks remain in residence and they are hard-pressed to protect their rights of privacy in the face of demands of development and tourism. The author reveals the monks' claim that the Egyptian government has imposed a ceiling of 50 on their number and they see themselves as carrying a special cross: to preserve and protect the monastery. "Not many of the dedicated ascetics want to

become hosts and objects of mass secular visitation," writes the author.

Hobbs does not shrink from writing about government infringement on sacred areas as voiced by the monks. They believe that after centuries of tolerance and respect from ruling Muslim authorities, they are now subject to official hostility. They claim that the Egyptian government is confiscating the lands which belong by tradition to the monastery. Al-Tur is one example. The monks complain that excavators dug through a cemetery and "disposed of the exhumed bodies in a mass grave two kilometres to the east." At Hammam Musa, north of Al-Tur, which has been in possession of the monastery since the fourth century AD, rumours of a large project being undertaken by Egyptian contractors to develop the area into a recreation complex containing a parking lot, clubhouse, cafeteria and swimming pool, set them into action. They decided, in 1988, to build a wall delimiting their property. Three quarters of the wall was complete when a bulldozer was sent in the middle of the night and the wall was levelled. "They destroyed everything," the author quotes an irate monk as saying.

Chapter two of *Mount Sinai* is devoted to the Old Testament, traditions which are "central to the faith and

identity of so many people of the world, this epic story has a trail which has attracted both sceptical and devout sleuths," writes Hobbs. Chapter three is titled "The Heavenly Citizenship" and the author covers one of the great spiritual themes in the Judeo-Christian and Muslim traditions: "the holy man's transformation in the wilderness."

One of the most delightful sections of the book is devoted to pastoralism. Bedouins apparently mark the passage of summer days by the changing harvest: "The apricots in late May and early June usher in the summer season," he writes, and goes on: "It is one of the busiest times because men and boys must pick the delicate fruits and transport them with care and haste to market in Kantin, and slice and dry those they will not sell. One memorable June day I assisted in the apricot harvest, recklessly consuming a large number of ripe fruits."

Hobbs is associate professor of geography at the University of Missouri-Columbia. In his introduction, he calls for the preservation of the Holy Mount and paints a horror story of a fanciful on Gebel Musa. True, the whole idea of a cable car was vetoed in 1990 — just before the book

went to press — and the European Union and the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency declared that the mountains surrounding Sinai were officially declared nature reserves; but this is no guarantee that the machinery for its protection will actually be set in motion. There are many sceptics.

Southern Sinai is being developed and promoted as a destination *par excellence* by the Egyptian Tourist Authority, and it is an unfortunate fact that no matter how much care is taken, tourism will inevitably have a negative impact on the environment, especially on the delicate desert ecology of the region. This fascinating book raises troubling questions for everyone concerned about the fate of wild and sacred places in the modern world.

In his introduction, the author writes: "Perhaps by telling the stories of the beliefs and experiences that have sanctified Mount Sinai, this book will recover some of the ebbing spirit of the place and revitalise those who would care for it." Hopefully it will. *Mount Sinai* by Joseph J. Hobbs is available in paperback edition with 66 illustrations at the American University in Cairo Bookshop and all major bookshops throughout Egypt. LE60.

Reviewed by Jill Kamil



St Catherine's Monastery, a mecca for the faithful

By courtesy of St Catherine's Monastery



The library was second only to the Vatican's



Young Bedouins in the vicinity

## Horse trappings Investing in tourism

Egypt is gearing up for the display of its equestrian-related objects in Saudi Arabia. **Nevine El-Aref reports**

Shields, swords, saddles and other forms of horse paraphernalia and combat weapons will soon lead horse enthusiasts through different eras of equestrianism in the world.

Egypt is among the participants in the Equestrian 1417 exhibition scheduled for November in Riyadh on the occasion of Saudi Arabia's presidency of the Seventh International Equestrian Federation. The display of over 300 equestrian-related objects will show the relationship between horsemen and horses in different countries throughout the ages.

The 15 objects from Egypt include seven items from the Egyptian Museum. Among them is a limestone stela featuring Ani on his war chariot that dates to the New Kingdom and was discovered in Minya. The other objects, found in Nubia, date from between the third and sixth centuries AD. They consist of a leather and wood shield, a sword with its silver sheath decorated with engravings, a silver hand-shield, a horse saddle decorated with three lions and an iron and silver spear.

The selection from the Islamic Museum includes Mameluke weapons used in equestrian sports and combat. They include a suit of armour and three shields — one for the knight's body, the others for his arms. All are decorated

with plant forms and calligraphy. Other armour, to protect the horses, include a steel cap ornamented with engravings of plants and golden script.

Ibrahim Abdel-Gelil, curator of foreign exhibitions at the Egyptian Museum, said that some items from the Tutankhamun collection were requested by Saudi Arabia but the request was refused by Egypt to comply with the law that no unique artefacts be exhibited abroad.

This first-of-its-kind exhibition will also include books and scripts on veterinary medicine, a collection of old prints of the Qur'an — opened where the verses speak of horses — and other documents. Cultural and scientific lectures on equestrian topics will be held on the fringes of the exhibition.

Held under the supervision of the Abdel-Aziz Public Library in Riyadh, Equestrian 1417 will be hosted in a new building that was specially constructed for the exhibition and equipped with the latest technology, said Abdel-Gelil.

Foreign experts from the Louvre, Berlin and British museums as well as The Shield and Hunting Instruments Museum in Austria have been assigned to organise the three-month exhibition. The British organisation Wingate and Johnston is responsible for packaging and shipping the exhibited objects.

Investors are enthusiastic about the Higher Council of Tourism (HCT) resolutions giving the private sector the go-ahead to build an airport at Marsa Alam and pave roads serving it. They also like the idea of reducing fees on yachts and at border points.

Mohamed Nesim, head of the South Sinai Investors Group, dubs the government attitude "advanced" and hailed their decision as conforming to international trends. This "first time" move for the Egyptian government, he says, "demonstrates that they are now convinced that the private sector can undertake the task of accelerating tourism development in Egypt."

Sightseeing stands to increase when sites are rendered more accessible and profits seem high at the end of the rainbow of rapid investment. The airport at Marsa Alam "will bring life to a relatively deserted area," says Nesim. At present, the nearest airport is 400km away in Hurgada.

But services such as electricity, drinking water, sewerage, a communications office, hotels and restaurants will become a necessity, along with a residential zone for workers developing infrastructure alongside airport construction — scheduled for completion in three to five years.

But some investors are not completely satisfied. "How can Egypt maximise its tourist potential before it has at least 30, or even 40, local airports to serve tourists?" asks Nesim.

who believes it is vital for small airports to be built on the Aqaba Gulf, and to cover hundreds of kilometres south of Hurgada as well. "These are virgin areas of astounding beauty," he says.

Providing Hurgada with a sweet water pipeline will put an end to a perennial problem facing investors. At present, tourist villages and hotels have to buy water trucked into Hurgada at black market prices, according to El-Mohamady Hoaydaq, head of the Red Sea Investors Group.

And the water desalination units, which cost millions, are still expected to function after the new pipeline is completed by the end of December 1996. So far only three tourist projects in Hurgada have their own water desalination units. Another 12 will soon join the club. "More water means more rapid development and more profits," says Nesim.

Tourism development in the Red Sea area is also bound to further increase once high-powered electricity is provided to Taba, Nuweiba, Dahab and Sharm El-Sheikh.

In order to further encourage development, the cabinet agreed to charge new tourism projects only two per cent in taxes instead of seven which, according to Nesim, used to put a heavy burden on their budgets.

The HCT also resolved to impose a 75 per cent reduction of fees imposed on yachts, tourist motor boats and cars crossing Egyptian borders. "Tourists coming from Israel used to pay LE10 at Taba," says Hoaydaq. "This fee has now been cancelled." Formalities at the borders have been streamlined and cars are now allowed a six-month licence. And investors believe this will boost Arab as well as regional tourism to Egypt.

Among issues still unresolved is the lack of coordination between the Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA) and the Ministry of Tourism when raising the entry fees for museums and archaeological sites. Investors complain that higher fees are imposed on tourists every season. "This is often decided at an inappropriate time," says Hoaydaq, who explained that the fees are often established after tourist companies have already announced the season's prices. "This often puts the companies in an awkward situation," he says.

## How to get there

### Buses

Super Jet, East Delta and West Delta buses operate throughout Egypt.

Super Jet  
Super Jet stations are located in Almasa (Heliopolis), Tahrir, Giza, Ramses Street and Cairo Airport. Buses travel to Alexandria, Port Said, Hurgada and Sinai. Tel. 772-663.

Cairo-Alexandria  
Services almost every half hour from 5:30am to 10pm, from Tahrir, then Giza, Almasa and the airport. Tickets LE19 until 9pm; LE21 thereafter; from the airport LE24 until 5pm; LE30 thereafter. A VIP bus with phone access leaves Almasa at 7:15am. Tickets from Almasa LE28; from the airport LE32 each way.

Cairo-Port Said  
Services every half hour from 6am to 8am; then 9am, 10am, 3pm, and 4:30pm, from Almasa, then Ramses Street. Tickets LE15 each way.

Alexandria-Port Said  
Services 6:45am, from Ramses Square in Alexandria. Departs Port Said 3:30pm. Tickets LE22 each way.

Cairo-Hurgada  
Services 8am and 2pm, from Tahrir, then Giza and Almasa. Departs Hurgada noon and 5pm. Tickets LE40 until 5pm, LE45 thereafter, both each way.

Alexandria-Hurgada  
Service 8pm, from Ramses Square, Alexandria. Departs Hurgada 2:30pm. Tickets LE50 each way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh  
Service 11pm, from Tahrir, then Almasa. Departs Sharm El-Sheikh 11pm. Tickets LE50 each way.

East Delta Bus Company  
Buses travel to North Sinai, South Sinai, Suez and Ismailia. Buses to Ismailia and Suez depart from Qalati (near Ramses Square), Almasa and Tahrir Square (near Heliopolis). Buses to North and South Sinai depart from the Sinai bus station at Abbasiya Square. Tel. 483-4753.

Cairo-Ismailia  
Services every 45 minutes from 6:30am to 6pm, from Qalati, then Almasa and Tahrir Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE3.75; air-conditioned bus LE2.5, one way.

Cairo-Suez  
Services every half an hour from 6am to 7pm, from Qalati, then Almasa and Tahrir Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE3.75; air-conditioned bus LE3, one way.

Cairo-El-Arish  
Services every hour from 7:30am to 4pm, from Qalati, then Almasa and Tahrir Square. Tickets deluxe bus LE3.75; air-conditioned bus LE3, one way.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh  
Services every 45 min. from 7am to 6:30pm from Abbasiya, then Almasa. Tickets morning LE27; evening LE40, one way.

Cairo-Nagadia  
Service 8am, from Abbasiya, then Almasa. Tickets deluxe bus LE31.

West Delta Bus  
Service to Tahrir and Almasa. Tel. 243-1846.

Cairo-Hurgada  
Services 9am, noon, 3pm, 10:30pm, 10:45pm and 11pm. Tickets LE30 one way.

Cairo-Safage  
Services 8am and 3pm. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Quesir  
Service 10pm. Tickets LE38 one way.

Cairo-Luxor  
Service 9am. Tickets LE35 one way.

Cairo-Aswan  
Service 5pm. Tickets LE50 one way.

Trains

Trains run to Alexandria, Port Said, Luxor and Aswan, from Ramses Station. Tel. 147 or 575-3535.

Cairo-Luxor-Aswan  
"French" deluxe trains with sleepers  
Services to Luxor and Aswan  
7:40pm and 9pm (reaching Luxor 6:40 am and 8am, Aswan 8:40am and 10am). Tickets to Luxor LE294 for foreigners and LE129 for Egyptians; to Aswan LE300 for foreigners; LE141 for Egyptians.

"Spanish" deluxe trains without sleepers

Services to Luxor and Aswan  
6:45pm and 8:45pm  
Tickets to Luxor LE294 for foreigners; LE129 for Egyptians; to Aswan LE300 for foreigners; LE141 for Egyptians.

Cairo-Alexandria  
VIP train. Service 8am. Tickets first class LE32 with a meal; LE22 without a meal. Service 11am noon, 4pm and 7pm. Tickets first class LE22, second class LE17.

"French" trains  
Services to Luxor and Aswan  
10:30pm. Tickets first class LE22, second class LE12.

Cairo-Port Said  
Services 6:30am and 8:45am  
Tickets first class LE45, second class LE26.

EgyptAir

There are between two and five domestic flights daily (check Egyptian Air's schedule). Open 300-2444, or Helpline 766-666.

Cairo-Luxor  
Tickets LE220 for Egyptians; LE290 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Hurgada  
LE780 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Cairo-Sharm El-Sheikh  
Tickets LE260 for Egyptians; LE320 for foreigners, both round-trip.

Sunny summer deals

Hotels

Here's a look at the special rates most hotels, especially resorts, are offering to Egyptians and foreign residents.

Hurgada  
Sunny beach resort. Hurgada. LE185 per person in a double room, including service charge, taxes and buffet breakfast. Valid until the end of July.

Hurgada Intercontinental LE200 for a single, LE240 for a double room, including service charge and taxes. Valid until 15 July.

Hurgada Marriott. LE200 per person in a double room including buffet breakfast, service charge and taxes. Valid until 15 July.

Helwan Regina Hurgada. LE130 per person in a double room including buffet breakfast, service charge and taxes. Valid until the end of the summer season.

Gaza  
El-Gaza Sousse Paradise LE135 per person in a double room on half board basis including service charge and taxes. Valid until the end of July.

Sharm El-Sheikh  
Sunny Beach Resort Sharm El-Sheikh. LE230 per person in a double room including service charge, taxes and buffet breakfast. Valid until the end of July.

Sharm El-Sheikh Marriott. LE240 for a single or double room, including buffet breakfast, service charge and taxes. Valid until 31 July.

Sharm El-Sheikh Movenpick Hotel. LE200 for a single and LE230 for a double room in the front by the swimming pool. The hotel offers prices of LE160 for a single and LE190 for a double room in the back, or sports area. Includes buffet breakfast, service charge and taxes. Valid until the end of July.

Travel agencies

Travel agencies are offering various packages both inside and outside Egypt this summer.

Flamingo Tours. A trip to Nice is LE2,850 for 8 days. Nice and London is LE5,490 for 15 days. Spain and Portugal is LE4,250 for 11 days. Athens and Rhodes is LE3,280 for 10 days. Paris and London is LE4,950 for 15 days. Rome, Florence, Venice is LE4,750 for 10 days and Sharm El-Sheikh is LE3,335 for 19 days. Prices for a special cruise around the Mediterranean in deluxe boats start from \$1,312 for 8 days.

Karnak Tours (organising trips to Marsa Matruh) for 4 days in three star hotels on a half board basis at prices starting from LE295. The company is also offering trips to Istanbul for 8 days at prices starting from LE1,450.

## EGYPT AIR

Telephone numbers of EGYPT AIR offices in governorates:

Abu Simbel Sales Office:	324836-324735
Alexandria Office: Ramsi:	4833357-4828778
Ghezz:	586461-586434
Airport Office:	4218464-4227888-4282837-4281989
Aswan Office:	315800/1/2/3/4
Airport Office:	488387-488568
Assiut Office:	323151-322711-324000-329487
Mansoura Office:	363978-363733
Hurgada Office:	4435914
Airport Office:	442883-443897
Ismailia Office:	328937-221958-221951/2-328936
Luxor Office:	388580/1/2/3/4
Airport Office:	388567/8
Luxor Office Karnak:	382348
Marsa Matruh Office:	934398
Menoufia Office (Sheikh El Koun):	233342-233523-233522
New Valley Office:	688981/895
Port Said Office:	224129-222878-228921
Port Said Office Karnak:	238833-239978
Sharm El-Sheikh Office:	688314-688489
Airport Office:	688488
Taba Office:	688530/10-530/11
Direct:	5783628
Tanta Office:	311758/311759
Zakazik Office:	349828-349830/1



17 July 1996

Al-Ahram

Sports 17

# Russia takes Al-Ahram handball

In front of thousands of spectators at the Cairo Stadium, the Russian handball team narrowly beat the Egyptians to be crowned champions of the first Al-Ahram International Handball Tournament. Inas Mazhar attended



Russia defeated Egypt 26-25 to win the first Al-Ahram International Handball Tournament by a hair's breadth at the final last Sunday. Four teams, from Russia, Portugal and the Czech Republic, had joined Egypt for the five-day event.

The bronze medal went to Portugal, who defeated the Czech Republic 19-18. Their victory went down well with the spectators, who appreciated the friendliness and good humour the Portuguese displayed throughout the tournament. They demonstrated their appreciation both on the pitch and on the victory podium, where the Portuguese won more applause than any other team, with the exception of the home side.

Players received their medals at a closing ceremony attended by Abdel-Moneim Emara, head of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports, and Ibrahim Nafie, Al-Ahram's board chairman, editor-in-chief of Al-Ahram and head of the tournament's organising committee.

The tournament's technical committee, headed by Hassan Mustafa, secretary-general of the National

Olympic Committee, selected the Russian player Koulechov Oleg for the award of best player. The top scorer's cup was awarded to Tomar Michal of the Czech Republic, who scored a total of 19 goals. Paulo Morgado of Portugal was selected as the tournament's best goalkeeper.

Each team played three matches in the tournament. For the Atlanta-bound Russian and the Egyptian teams, the competition was a great chance to prepare for the forthcoming Games, due to start next week. Egypt will be playing in Group A, Russia in Group B.

The day before the finals was a rest day, and the organisers ensured that the players would remember more of Egypt than just the stadium by organising a sightseeing tour of Cairo's monuments.

Then came the day of reckoning. The Egyptians, ranked sixth in the world, played a strong and thrilling final against the Russians, 1996 European champions and Olympic gold medal winners, currently ranked fifth in the world.

Javier Cuesta, the Egyptian tech-

nical manager, was happy with his team's performance. The squad were on peak form, he said. In his view, the one-goal loss to the Russians, predicted to win the gold at Atlanta, was no sign of weakness. In fact it was proof that the team had improved and would be in a winning position next time round.

However, he added, the team had made a few errors which had led to their defeat. By the time the players realised their mistakes they were able to bounce back and narrow the goal difference.

Cuesta, who was the Spanish team coach at the Barcelona Olympics, said that the Al-Ahram championship had been excellent preparation for Atlanta, and had given him the opportunity to detect the strong and weak points of both the individual team members and the squad as a whole. The names of the 16-man Olympic team would be announced in the next few days, he added.

The Egyptian team is scheduled to play two friendly matches, against Croatia and Sweden, in Atlanta before the Games.



Ibrahim Nafie gives the cup to the Russian goalkeeper

photo: Aref Saad El-Din

## Olympic countdown

### High-tech

INTERNATIONAL Olympic Committee officials have given final approval to the Atlanta Olympic drug-testing laboratory, two weeks before the opening of the centennial Games. The laboratory includes new technology aimed at detecting smaller and older traces of drugs in athletes' bodies than previous tests. To check for steroid use, three high resolution mass spectrometers have been rented by the lab. They can detect steroids in a competitor's system for up to three months, Atlanta lab directors said.

Of 9,367 competitors from the 1992 Barcelona Games, five tested positive for banned substances. John Cantwell, chief medical officer for the Atlanta Games, said he expects around 12 to 15 positive tests from the 10,700 competitors.

### Olympic women

THE ATLANTA Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG) has made a commitment to enhance the participation of women in the Olympic Games, facilitating the participation of more women competitors than ever before and fostering greater awareness of women in sport. In all, 3,779 women are expected to compete in the centennial Olympic Games — a nearly 40 per cent increase over the 2,708 women who competed in Barcelona in 1992.

Additions to the 1996 programme have created more opportunities for women. These include the addition of softball and women's football, a women's épée event in fencing, a 4x200m freestyle relay in swimming, and a points race in cycling. In addition, there are several events in which both men and women compete, such as mountain biking, beach volleyball and badminton mixed doubles. ACOG is also admitting an additional four women's basketball and four volleyball teams over and above the number who competed in Barcelona in 1992.

Those attending the 1996 Games will have the opportunity to learn more about women's contribution to the Olympics. "The Olympic woman", one of the Olympic Arts Festival's exhibitions, chronicles the history of women in the Games, beginning with the 19 women who competed in the 1900 Games in Paris — the first Olympic women.

Women are also key in the planning of Atlanta 1996: more than 52 per cent of ACOG employees are women; more than a third of ACOG's competition managers are women, and three of the five planning managers are women. In fact, nearly 30 per cent of ACOG's senior management are women — well above the national average.



## Squash juniors set to win

Cairo is hosting the Ninth World Junior Men's Squash Championship. According to experts and international rankings, Egypt has a good chance of winning, writes Eman Abdel-Moeti

Egypt looks set fair to win this year's World Junior Squash Championship, to be held on home turf in Cairo from 13-26 July. If all goes well it will be the second world championship title for Egypt's juniors, whose chances are improved still further by the presence of Ahmed Faizy and Karim El-Mistikawi, who were both on the world-title winning team of August 1994.

"It was a great achievement, and we are determined to do it again this year," Ahmed Faizy told reporters last Saturday. Faizy has come a long way since '94. World-ranked 253 among professionals back then, he was determined to better his rank fast enough to gain enough experience to become World Junior Champion after Ahmed Barada. He won the under-16 title in the British Open twice, in 1994 and '95, and played in a variety of other international squash championships, where he beat stars like Rodney Martin and Pakistan's Shamsuddin Khan. Within the space of two world ranking lists, Faizy's position jumped from 253 to 36, and he is currently the world's junior number one according to the International Squash Federation.

Experts who saw him in the British Open found a similarity between his style and Jansher Khan's. "Faizy covered the court in long, low strides and driving lunges, somewhat reminiscent of Jansher," reported the British monthly magazine, *Squash Player*. His participation in so many international competitions has steadily improved his control over the court, and enhanced his stamina. When asked about what he intends to achieve in this year's World Junior Championship, he answered: "To be the world junior champion, like Barada."

Faizy's teammate Karim El-Mistikawi, world ranked 94, has also been prominent in competition, in order to gain more experience playing tough customers like Simon Harke, who beat him 3-0 in the Al-Ahram Championship in May. "I simply train, practise, and do the best I can when

I'm on court," commented Mistikawi. The International Squash Federation has ranked Mistikawi among the top 5 to 8 squash juniors in the world. Karim has been training regularly with Egypt's senior player and national team coach Amir Wahab.

The third team member is Amr Shabana. Shabana made his international debut in the British Junior Open in February 1995, and has been progressing tremendously ever since. From a world ranking of 166, Shabana is now ranked 111 in the latest list, published after the Al-Ahram Squash Championship. Although his frame is slight, Shabana does not waste any shots, and he knows how to move his opponent around the court. His performance now equals Mistikawi's and Faizy's, but he lacks their experience. Mohamed Abbas, who will play the role of substitute, has also participated in a few international championships. If he performs well at this year's championship, he may well find a place in World Junior Championship team in future years.

Unfortunately, the only preparation the Egyptian Federation provided for the team was a training trip to Courtlands Club in England for three weeks in June. The players trained with Ahmed Safwat, who works at that club, before coming back to Egypt at the end of the month to resume their training with Amir Wahab.

About 164 players will participate in the individual event, beginning on 13 July. Twenty nine countries, divided into seven groups, will compete in the team event, which begins on 21 July. Egypt will be playing with Pakistan, Finland, and Malaysia in Group A. England, Australia, France, and Canada will play in Group B. Championship venues are the Shams Sporting Club and the squash courts at the Cairo Stadium. The International Squash Federation has seeded Egypt number one, followed by England, Australia, Pakistan, France, and Malaysia.



Kenyan player scoring a point in the Egyptian net

photo: Abdel-Aziz Nimir

## Gezira shoot ahead

LAST Sunday at Ahli's indoor halls, Egypt's Gezira team beat Kenya's Cooperative 101-54 in the first leg of the semifinals of the African Basketball Championship for League Winners.

With this victory, Gezira have paved their way to the finals, even before the second leg match to be held in Nairobi on 20 July. "Kenya is a strong and powerful team and

we had expected a close match," said Adel Sabri, Gezira's coach.

However, the Kenyan team were not on form, and it was a one-sided match. The Kenyans were unable to keep pace with Egypt's series of three-pointers, fast breaks and quick passes.

Egypt's other representative in the championship, Ithad of Alexandria, unexpectedly lost their match

against Ebn-Comets of Nigeria by 30 points. Many put their loss down to biased refereeing. Only one neutral referee was available, and, since the Egyptian team had not travelled with a referee to cut down on expenses, the other referee was Nigerian. Gezira's Sabri is keen for the Alexandrians to do better in the second leg in Egypt on 20 July to have an Egyptian final.

## It's a Kroll world

Once again, a highly-paid foreign coach is in the dock. This time it is football's Ruud Kroll. Abeer Anwar examines the controversy surrounding the Dutch trainer

With a salary of LE100,000 per month, great things were expected of the national football team's coach, Dutchman Ruud Kroll. But so far, the new broom has failed to sweep clean, leading football's decision makers to question whether he is worth the money.

Indeed, the current scenario, and the similarities of Kroll's experience to that of former coach Nol de Ruiter, has led some analysts to question the wisdom of the Egyptian Football Federation's policy of pinning all its hopes, and vast sums of money, on foreign coaches whose work histories are unlikely to have prepared them for salvaging a national football side.

"The Kroll crisis came to a head with a dismal Egyptian performance in Ghana some weeks ago. The national team went down 0-1 to Ghana in a friendly match, only managing to salvage their pride with a 1-0 win over the second team. While the Ghanaian episode caused immense frustra-

tion to fans, players, officials and retired professionals alike, it was only the culmination of a discontent which has been stirring ever since Kroll took over from the previous incumbent, Egyptian Taha Ismail.

Egyptian Football Federation (EFF) deputy Samir Zaher was the official in charge of monitoring the team's progress, and had been with the players in Ghana. On their return, he submitted a report to the federation, which not only commented on the team's lacklustre performance, but also detailed Zaher's views on Kroll's drawbacks as far as training methods and tactics are concerned. The report recommended that Kroll be dismissed from his post, and Zaher added: "I cannot continue to supervise the team while I remain unconvinced by Kroll's training methods, his tactics and his plans for the matches."

With Zaher's resignation as team supervisor, the EFF was jolted into action. The

federation studied the report, and its then president Maj. Gen. Youssef Dahshoury Harb announced the federation's acceptance of Zaher's resignation. He himself was to take over Zaher's responsibilities until a substitute was found, but following the dismissal of the federation's board following the Ahli-Zamalek match where Zamalek walked off the pitch before the end of the game, the situation is no longer clear. Meanwhile a new coach and a new administrative manager have been found to assist Kroll.

Zamalek's trainer, Farouq Gaafar, has been appointed as assistant coach, and the new administrative manager is Samir Adil. Both men started their new jobs at the beginning of July, when Zamalek's struggle to win the league finally ended. Gaafar replaced Farouq El-Sayed, who will take charge of the second team, currently preparing for the Mediterranean Games at the end of July.

The players and fans are happy with this decision. They remember Gaafar from Taha Ismail's days as head coach, when Gaafar was his assistant coach. By all accounts the two were a successful team, but their partnership ended when Kroll took over.

Gaafar, meanwhile, is delighted to be back with the team. "It's an honour for me to help train the national team," he said, "and I promise that I'll do my best to bring Egyptian football back onto the international scene. I will also do my best to foster an atmosphere of harmony among the players, because this has a great effect on their performance."

He bears no grudges towards Kroll and is keen to distance himself from the controversy. "I have the greatest respect for him and have absolutely no hard feelings. On

the contrary, I'm looking forward to working with him and learning from him. All I want to do is work for the benefit of the national team."

With the resentment and furor following the notorious Ahli-Zamalek league game, some Ahli fans have begun to question the way Gaafar will deal with Ahli players. Will he be biased against them? Gaafar is

adamant that he will not. "The minute I took over my new job as the national team coach, I forgot everything about Zamalek and Ahli... All I am bearing in mind now is that I am training Egypt's national team and that what I am doing is for the benefit of Egypt. I will deal with Ahli team members not as individual players but as a part of a national team and as national players."

## Graf crowned queen again

STEFFI GRAF even amazes herself. Winning a seventh Wimbledon title with a bad knee, a cold, little practice and her father languishing in jail was something she had never expected.

"It's just incredible to me how I have always been able to rise to the occasion," Graf said after her 6-3, 7-5 victory over Spain's Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario. "Winning seven Wimbledon is something I never imagined I would be able to do. You can't really put it in words," she said. The title was the 100th she'd earned over the course of her career and her 20th Grand Slam title.

Of her Wimbledon titles, Graf said this one was the most unexpected. What made this win unbelievable was that for the 100th time, she has said yes when her body was saying no. A week before the start of the tournament, she injured a tendon in her right knee. She was able to limp through just three days of practice before playing her first match in the biggest tournament of the year.

Richard Krajicek may have dropped the Wimbledon



trophy as he posed for a pack of photographers, but he never looked likely to let the rain-interrupted men's singles final slip from his grasp against American Malivai Washington. The Dutch player, who put out defending champion Pete Sampras and the 1991 Wimbledon titleholder Michael Stich in previous rounds, overwhelmed Washington with his power serves and huge forehands to score an comprising 6-3, 6-4, 6-3 victory win.

It was the first time in Wimbledon's history that two unseeded players reached the final, and the first time since Germany's Boris Becker won the title in 1985 when he was an unseeded player.

Krajicek, the first Dutch player ever to win a Grand



slam event couldn't believe it. He said that he was "surprised" rather than "upset", that he had not been seeded for the championships, despite being ranked number 13 in the world.

Krajicek's Wimbledon record before this year was not one to boast about. He was beaten in the first round in 1994 and 1995, and his best performance was in 1993 when he was beaten in the fourth round by Andre Agassi.

The newly-crowned champion moved into the top 10 of the ATP men's world ranking list on Monday. He climbed from the 13th to the eighth spot.

Compiled from AP and AFP reports

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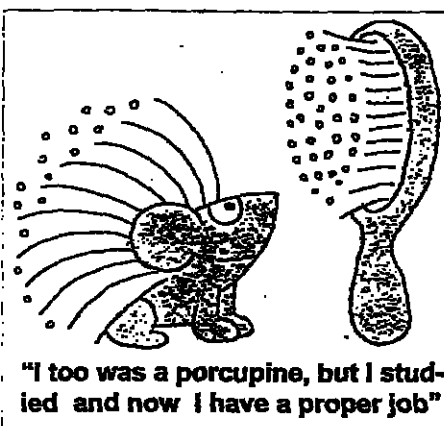


## Bahgat Osman: When wit reigns supreme

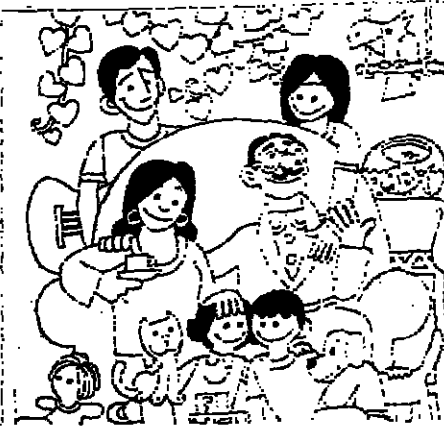
He lives in a world full of problems. He solves them with humour. Raillery is his profession but he never laughs at people: He laughs with them and specially with children



Photo: Amr Shazly



"I too was a porcupine, but I studied and now I have a proper job"



"I went to another country... and under every stone I turned, I found an Egyptian. I saw an Alexandrian lawyer working in a supermarket, a journalist, native of the Delta, driving a taxi, a physician from Bulaq in the construction business. I saw others working in shops and in hotels. They were away from their country and their families, doing jobs they had never been prepared for... they were making money to support their loved ones back home and had lost their dreams and their sense of belonging..." says caricaturist Bahgat, back from a trip abroad. What he has seen of his compatriots has not filled his heart with joy.

We are in Bahgat's living room. Badr Hamada, his wife, is holding Abdel-Moeti, her rag-doll creation, in mid-air, suspended to her husband's lips. When he stops talking, she slips away silently towards the kitchen. Abdel-Moeti is now perched askew on the bookshelf, contemplating the room beneath him ironically. There are potted plants, sturdy furniture, paintings, sculptures and lots of books. Quality and sober good taste win hands up. The impression is one of constance, of a real home in which a real family lives. "Badr wakes up first, at around 6 am," says Bahgat, "she makes the coffee and we have it together, then we start working side by side." Had he not told us, we would have imagined it. Something in the atmosphere gives away the friendship, the kind of complicity which is born, for the lucky ones, from long years of companionship.

Bahgat is attached to his family, his friends, his home, his country and the solid values of times gone by. Honour, honesty, patriotism are not negotiable for him and their absence sets him on the war path. He wins his battles with his pen, each caricature aiming at the core... and scoring.

Bahgat places a tape in his record player and the sarcastic voice of Ziyad Rabbani fills the room. Bahgat sings along and there is a twinkle in his eyes. "I love him, I love this tape even more than the others," Rabbani is singing *Dalal*. "It is his own story, apparently," Bahgat explains, with a chuckle. "He wanted to marry a girl and her father rejected him and married her off to someone with a more serious profession." He shakes his head in wonder. He does not say 'can you imagine, such stupidity' but he does not need to.

There are lots of other things that bring the same expression on Bahgat's face, one of genuine surprise, especially when he thinks that they are happening to us Egyptians, who have always been a simple, fun loving people. "When did all this change take place," he seems to be asking himself. Consumerism, for instance, baffles him. How could it hit us so hard... and selfishness, with everyone now looking for his own best interest... Lack of loyalty to one's place of work... Bahgat mulls over this idea for a while.

"At *Rose El-Youssef*, in the beginning," he winds up, "we were one family, we supported each other. It did not matter whose caricature was the best, mine, Bahgory, Jahin's or Hegazi's. We were just immensely proud of ourselves as a group when the issue looked good. On many occasions I felt my jokes were not so hot and that Jahin or Bahgory had been funnier. It did egg me on, so I tried harder: mind you, I cannot say that we were not competing with each other. But in the end, it was our magazine, we had done it together, and one really good sketch or quip from any one of us made up for the less original ones."

People make fun of loyalty these days, suggests Bahgat, and a twinge of sadness is now detectable

in his voice. "And the family..." Bahgat is away again, maybe remembering his childhood. He was born in a poor suburb of Cairo, but although he does not think that those years of his life are worth talking about, one can guess that he did not have a loveless childhood. "In the old days," he is saying, "people were so much closer. When they had to go twenty kilometres away from their birth place, they talked about being 'abroad'. Now the father leaves his wife and children in Egypt and goes to work in a foreign country. Sometimes he does not come back for years."

This new absence of love, of a sense of kinship, is maybe, for him, the most disturbing aspect of our society. He, himself, is brimming with love and his most biting humour always includes an affectionate wink, a hint of understanding and complicity. "Don't worry, we are in it together," he seems to say. His compassion for the poor, the downtrodden, the underprivileged, is inexhaustible and his jokes often stem from his anguish when confronted with their inability to defend themselves against life's injustices.

His heart also goes to children, but here, he is no longer plagued with the rage of helplessness. This is probably where he feels he has a mission. He writes children's books "but I never tell them what to do," he says. "I simply share my experiences with them, because my only advantage over them is that I am so many years older, and therefore I have practiced living more than they have. I never attempt to teach them." He has applied the same philosophy to his own children. He believes that parental influence is strong until the child is fifteen or sixteen. By this time, he/she should be able to take responsibility. Showing one's children how to be responsible, is for Bahgat what education is

all about. This is one domain that he does not take lightly and his stories for children are never condescending.

Even writing children's books can have its odd twists, however, and Bahgat is prompt to point them out. He is no longer the passionate educator. He winks and rises suddenly: "I'll show you something." Humming, he turns the tape over and Ziyad Rabbani's ironical incantations fill the room once more. Bahgat is searching through the elegant display of his library and finally produces a series of children's books. "I am the author of these books," he says, "but you would never know, unless you were a good detective. Anyone would think that the backers have produced these books single handed. Their logo appears on every page. Sometimes twice. As for my name... well... if you are wearing your glasses, you may be able to spy it, tucked away in this little corner, on the back cover."

But Bahgat is not bitter. After he has had his laugh, he concedes that "if you want to be financed you must be prepared to make concessions." Badr did not want to make concessions, he tells us, obviously proud of his wife. "This is why, instead of working at the National Puppet Theatre, which, in view of her talent, is her rightful place, she is making dolls that she exhibits abroad." "Badr," he explains, "could not compromise. She wanted a story, a real one on which to base her work. They wanted her to do the work even if they did not have a good story. She is an artist not a cake decorator. A mediocre cake can be saved by the decoration. Theatre is different. So she left."

What Bahgat is implying is that he can yield sometimes, because he has his own way of objecting. He has a weapon, his humour, with which he can even up the score, while putting up with cir-

cumstances not to his liking, but not so Badr. She needs straightforward action. He however understands, approves, and supports her decision. He wants her to keep on making dolls. Bahgat's preoccupation with changes in children's education, his greatest concern at the moment, includes the extensive use of dolls and marionettes.

"I have written about this concept in my book *Sadqa Bila Hudud* (Friendship Without Frontiers), he says. "I imagine a kindergarten full of dolls, with children taught geography by examining dolls from all over the world, mathematics, by measuring them, weighing them, and foreign languages by making up small dialogues in the language of each doll... why not? Children learn through play." Bahgat has a lot to say about education. Teachers, according to him, are constantly giving orders, they want to be obeyed. They stand on a pedestal. They are the ultimate authority. "How can we bring up responsible children while using such methods?" he asks indignantly.

"When they grow up, these children will be unable to take the simplest decision without being told by someone in authority." He is about to tell a joke, maybe one among those about bureaucrats, he is so fond of telling, but he thinks better of it and simply chuckles to himself. "We need the best teachers for our kindergartens," he continues, "a PhD in education - and a good pay which will boost the teacher's self esteem - would not go amiss for someone who is in charge of little children: the younger the child, the more delicate the task."

One cannot wait to see Bahgat's and Badr's grandchildren.

Profile by Fayza Hassan



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## Pack of Cards

by Madame Sosostris

♦ I have always seen myself as rather well-developed woman, and it's no secret that I've been involved in the world of media for decades, now, so when the Fulbright Commission in Egypt called me recently to ask me to take part in a seminar - the fifth in their *Sharing the Experience* series - entitled *Women's Development Issues in the Media*, I was obliged to decline - what could I possibly learn that I didn't already know? I did, however, attend just to provide a little moral support, and it's a good thing that I did, too, because it was there that I realised that no matter how much you think you know, there's always more that over 50 intellectuals, scholars, diplomats and NGO members can teach you. We spoke about where women's issues stand as far as the media is concerned, about the importance of the media in influencing public opinion of women, about its importance in projecting and improving the image of Egyptian women, and in presenting a balanced coverage of our significant contributions to society. One of the most interesting and animated discussions I have had in years, made all the more stimulating by the presence of the speakers: Professor of Community Development and Chairwoman for the Alliance of Arab Women Hoda Badran, Professor of Economics and Chairman of the New Civic Forum Said El-Naggar, Assistant Professor of Journalism and Mass Communication and member of the News, Political, and Cultural committees at the Egyptian radio and television union Magda Bagnid, as well as session moderator Professor of Journalism and Mass Communication and prominent *Al-Ahram* columnist Hassan Ragab.

♦ For most people, making the trek to the International Conference Centre in Nasr City is a venture into the twilight zone. Not for me. For me it's just around the corner from home, and so I was one of the first to settle into my seat in the Centre's Khufu Hall last night, eagerly anticipating the Cairo Radio and Television Festival's opening ceremony. Organised by the Radio and Television Union, under the auspices of Information Minister Safwat El-Sherif, the opening ceremony, hosted by Festival head, head of the TV production sector Mamdouh El-Leithy, was a grand affair. Even the opening speeches were quite interesting. But what really stole the show was the spectacular musical performance by actress/dancer Lucy and actor/singer Mahmoud El-Golady. After that, we all settled deeper into our seats and enjoyed *The Search for Tutankhamen*, a dramatic historical film starring the distinguished Hussein Fahmy. All I have to say is this: if the festival itself is as enjoyable as this ceremony was, then I for one will make sure to take an active interest.

♦ The Hilton Hotel in Nurelba was flooded with *paparazzi* recently when Minister of Tourism Mamdouh El-Beltagi held a press conference with 50 representatives from Italian TV stations, newspapers and magazines to introduce the first ever charter flight from Milan to Taba. If only I'd known in time! Alas, I found out much too late. How I long to have been present at the lavish cocktail reception and dinner which followed and took place against the spectacular backdrop of the Red Sea and Sinai mountains.

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